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Inclusive Engagement, Resilient Communities

Community Engagement Guidelines
For Humanitarian Action

Prepared by
National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
In collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan
May 2025

Table of Contents

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CE	Community Engagement
CFM	Community Feedback Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
PIDE	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRCS	Pakistan Red Crescent Society
RSPN	Rural Support Programmes Network
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
TOC	Theory of Change

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Participation in Action

"Community engagement is not a tool, it is a commitment to dignity, dialogue, and the belief that every person matters, especially in the times of crisis."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

Acknowledgements

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The development of the Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action has been a collaborative and consultative effort. We sincerely thank all those who generously contributed their time, expertise, and valuable insights.

From the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), we extend our sincere gratitude to Mr. M. Idrees Mahsud, Member Disaster Risk Reduction (MDRR), for his invaluable guidance on the content, structure, and objectives of these guidelines. His strong emphasis on placing community engagement at the heart of emergency response inspired the integration of global best practices with local realities. The result is a cohesive, context-specific framework that not only guides NDMA's efforts but also serves as a benchmark for partners to standardize and strengthen community engagement practices across Pakistan.

We are especially grateful to Ms. Zulekha Advisor/Program Manager, Gender and Child Cell for her outstanding coordination and facilitation throughout the review and approval processes. Her dedication and meticulous attention to detail ensured smooth communication and timely feedback at every stage.

From UNICEF Pakistan, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Masooma Qazilbash, Programme Specialist DRR and Mr. Scott Whoolery, Chief Field Operations, for their strategic guidance and technical support throughout the development of these guidelines. Their leadership in facilitating engagement with NDMA and steering the consultative process ensured that the guidelines remain inclusive, actionable, and grounded in field realities.

We are also deeply grateful to Mr. Elnur Aliyev, Chief Social and Behaviour Change, and Ms. Huma Arif Khan, Social and Behaviour Change Specialist for their meticulous reviews, valuable technical support in the field of community engagement, and insightful guidance throughout the process. Their expertise was instrumental in refining the document to align with global community engagement standards and frameworks.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Muhammad Shafique, Consultant for Accountability to Affected People, for spearheading the development of these guidelines. His work reflects a rigorous review of global best practices and a nuanced understanding of community engagement principles, resulting in culturally sensitive and context-specific guidance tailored to Pakistan's humanitarian priorities.

This collective effort highlights the power of partnership in advancing meaningful and effective community engagement in humanitarian action.

Message from the Chairman, National Disaster Management Authority
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Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to disasters, facing frequent natural and human-induced hazards, from catastrophic floods and earthquakes to prolonged droughts and extreme weather events.

The tragic lessons of the 2005 earthquake, the 2010 and 2022 floods, and the escalating climate crisis have highlighted a critical truth: *resilience begins with inclusive preparedness, response, and recovery*.

Communities are not just beneficiaries or recipients of aid; they are the first line of defence in any disaster. Their meaningful and sustained engagement is the cornerstone of effective and lasting resilience. Recognizing this, the National Disaster Management Authority places communities at the heart of disaster response and preparedness. NDMA deeply values their inclusive participation across all phases of the disaster cycle, ensuring responses are context-specific, culturally appropriate, and grounded in the needs and strengths of those most affected.

It gives me great pleasure to present the *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action*, a collaborative effort between NDMA and UNICEF Pakistan. These guidelines mark a transformative step toward institutionalizing community-led disaster management. Rooted in global best practices yet tailored to Pakistan's unique risks, they provide a national framework for inclusive participation, local ownership, and accountable two-way communication. From participatory rural appraisals to innovative digital platforms, the guidelines offer practical tools to ensure the inclusion and active participation of all, particularly women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

To all humanitarian actors, government institutions, and development partners: I call upon you to embrace these guidelines as a shared roadmap. By aligning our efforts under this standardized approach, we can amplify coordination, enhance transparency, and ensure every intervention delivers maximum impact for those most vulnerable.

Together, through inclusive engagement and the unwavering strength of our communities, we can forge a future where Pakistan is not only prepared for disasters but emerges safer, stronger, and more resilient than before.

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Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik HI (M)
Chairman, NDMA
May 2025

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Message from the Representative of UNICEF Pakistan

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Pakistan is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, facing recurring floods, earthquakes, droughts, and climate-driven crises that disproportionately affect children and vulnerable communities. In this challenging context, UNICEF has maintained a strong presence in Pakistan for decades, working closely with the government and partners to safeguard the rights and well-being of children. Through its programmes in health, nutrition, education, child protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), as well as its robust humanitarian action, UNICEF plays a vital role in responding to emergencies, strengthening resilience, and ensuring that the most at-risk populations are not left behind.

At UNICEF, one of our core strategic priorities is to strengthen Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People (CE/AAP) across all our programmes, ensuring that communities are active partners at the centre of our interventions. From the devastating 2022 floods to smaller scale localized emergencies, we have seen how empowering communities with knowledge, platforms, and tools save lives and build resilience. UNICEF's role in Pakistan has always been rooted in amplifying community voices, whether through participatory risk assessments, informed planning, robust response monitoring, feedback mechanisms, or capacity-building to ensure no one is left behind.

I am proud of our close collaboration with the Government of Pakistan and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to align our efforts with national priorities and institutionalize and operationalize CE/AAP approaches. This publication of Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action represents a milestone in our joint commitment to coordinated, informed, and inclusive disaster management. My sincere appreciation goes to NDMA for their leadership in shaping this vital framework. By integrating these guidelines into policies and equipping partners with standardized tools, we can foster trust, ownership, and inclusivity in humanitarian action. Communities are not passive recipients; they are rights holders, first responders, decision-makers, and agents of change. Our success hinges on the meaningful participation of communities across the entire programme cycle, from design to evaluation.

Together, through inclusive engagement, we can transform preparedness into action, crises into opportunities, and vulnerabilities into resilience. Let these guidelines remind us that every child's safety begins with listening to and empowering the communities that nurture them.

Abdullah A Fadil
Representative | UNICEF Pakistan
May 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Empowerment and Ownership

"When communities are given the space to lead, they move from recipients to decision-makers. Empowerment is not just a goal; it's the foundation of sustainable change."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

1. Executive Summary

Pakistan faces heightened vulnerability to natural and human-induced disasters, including floods, earthquakes, and extreme weather events. Catastrophic incidents such as the 2005 earthquake, the 2010 floods, and the 2022 floods have caused widespread devastation, compounded by climate change, rapid urbanization, and environmental degradation. These risks disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, highlighting the critical need for effective community engagement in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) spearheads disaster risk reduction and management in Pakistan, operating through Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs). NDMA is responsible for policy formulation, coordination of national and international disaster efforts, and strengthening institutional and community capacities. Recognizing communities as first responders, the NDMA prioritizes meaningful engagement to enhance resilience and preparedness.

These *Community Engagement Guidelines* establish a standardized framework for inclusive and effective disaster management across Pakistan. The guidelines provide practical tools for involving communities in preparedness, response, and recovery while fostering collaboration among NDMA, local authorities, and humanitarian partners. Emphasizing participation, cultural sensitivity, and inclusivity, the guidelines ensure that marginalized groups such as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are actively represented in all phases. To support active engagement, these guidelines introduce a range of tools including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and digital platforms to enhance reach, ensure inclusive participation, and promote informed decision-making.

A comprehensive desk review of global best practices in community engagement identified core standards that form the foundation of these guidelines. Key principles include inclusive participation ensuring all community members, especially marginalized groups, have a voice and local ownership and leadership to promote accountability and sustainability. Two-way communication is critical for fostering trust, dispelling misinformation, and maintaining transparency, while culturally adapted programs enhance relevance and effectiveness. Empowerment through capacity-building equips communities with vital disaster management skills, and gender-sensitive approaches guarantee equitable involvement. Furthermore, collaboration with local institutions, context-specific communication strategies, and transparent processes reinforce trust and accountability, ensuring community engagement aligns with broader development goals.

However, despite ongoing efforts, significant challenges persist, including the exclusion of marginalized groups, weak stakeholder coordination, and low community awareness. Cultural barriers, inadequate feedback mechanisms, accessibility gaps in remote areas, mistrust, capacity limitations, and insufficient community ownership further hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of engagement initiatives. To maximize impact, the guidelines advocate for:

- Standardized frameworks incorporating international best practices,
- Inclusive, gender-responsive planning methodologies,
- Enhanced multi-stakeholder coordination among government bodies, NGOs, and community leaders, and
- Integrated communication systems combining digital innovations with traditional channels.

Figure 1. Community Engagement at a Glance

Preparedness	Response	Recovery	Cross-Cutting Considerations
✅ **OBJECTIVES**	✅ **OBJECTIVES**	✅ **OBJECTIVES**	✅ **OBJECTIVES**
Build community resilience & readiness	Ensure effective aid & transparent communication	Strengthen long-term resilience & rehabilitation	Ensure effective engagement in all phases
📌 **CE STANDARDS**	📌 **CE STANDARDS**	📌 **CE STANDARDS**	📌 **CE STANDARDS**
Inclusive Participation, Capacity Bldg., Two-Way Communication	Two-Way Comm., Cultural Adaptation, Inclusion	Empowerment, Sustainability, Gender Sensitivity & Inclusivity	Inclusivity, Ownership, Feedback Mechanisms
🛠 **Community Engagement Tools**	🛠 **Community Engagement Tools**	🛠 **Community Engagement Tools**	🛠 **Community Engagement Tools**
Focus Group Discussions, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Community Meetings, Mosque Announcements, Workshops & Simulation Drills	SMS/Alerts social media & Hotlines, Storytelling & Street Theatre, Religious Leader Partnerships, Suggestion Boxes, Pictorial warnings signs for illiterate	Community Scoreboards, Gender Analysis & Separate Meeting Spaces, Storytelling & Street Theatre, School-Based Clubs & Vocational Training	Real-time mobile platforms, Community Co-creation, Two-way Communication
👥 Key Stakeholders & Roles	👥 Key Stakeholders & Roles	👥 Key Stakeholders & Roles	👥 Key Stakeholders & Roles
<u>NDMA/PDMAs/DDMAs</u>: Policy development & curriculum integration <u>NGOs</u>: Training & mobilization of marginalized groups Community Leaders: Facilitate trust and engagement, Youth & <u>Women Groups</u>: Support local initiatives & gender inclusivity Academia: Research & training evaluations	Media: Disseminate early warnings <u>NDMA & NGOs</u>: Ensure coordination, & monitor fund allocation <u>Volunteers</u>: Door-to-door outreach & emergency aid distribution, <u>Religious Leaders</u>: Adapt messaging to cultural norms <u>Local Government</u>: Enforce inclusive policies	<u>NDMA & INGOs</u>: Support training & long-term recovery programs <u>CSOs & Local Authorities</u>: Monitor progress & ensure accountability <u>Women's Groups & LHWs</u>: Address gender-specific needs, Private Sector: Provide resources & infrastructure support	All Stakeholders in collaboration
🟢 How to Ensure Inclusion	🟢 How to Ensure Inclusion	🟢 How to Ensure Inclusion	🟢 How to Ensure Inclusion
Representation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in preparedness activities, Community-led disaster preparedness committees	Use local languages and accessible channels including illiterate and remote groups, Gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate messaging	Community-led recovery planning, Inclusive livelihood programs targeting vulnerable populations	Inclusivity of marginalized groups, Co-creation of solutions Technology use for engagement Feedback mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

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Inclusivity & Participation

"Community engagement must be inclusive, ensuring participation of women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and other marginalized groups in all phases of disaster management."

— Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. Context of Disaster Management in Pakistan

Pakistan is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, facing a wide range of natural and human-induced hazards, including floods, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones, landslides, extreme weather events and industrial or technological accidents[1,2]. These disasters have devastating impacts on lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, and the economy, extremely affecting vulnerable and marginalized communities. The frequency and intensity of these events are further exacerbated by climate change, urbanization, and environmental degradation.

In the past, Pakistan has experienced catastrophic disasters, such as the 2005 earthquake, the 2010 floods, and the 2022 floods[3,4]. The 2005 earthquake resulted in approximately 75,000 fatalities and left many more homeless. The 2010 floods affected 20 million people and caused approximately 2,000 deaths. In 2022, unprecedented monsoon rains submerged one-third of the country, affecting 33 million people, half of whom were women and children. Rising temperatures, glacier melt in the northern regions, and unchecked deforestation further intensify Pakistan's vulnerability to disasters, making community-centred engagement crucial for long-term resilience[5].

These recurring disasters highlight the urgent need for a proactive and inclusive approach to disaster management. While the government and humanitarian organizations have made significant efforts to respond to disasters[6], the role of communities as first responders and key stakeholders in emergency response has often been underutilized.

There is a growing recognition that empowering communities to meaningfully participate in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery is essential to building long-term resilience and minimizing the impact of future disasters. Community engagement is not only crucial for effective preparedness and response but also central to recovery and sustainable development.

Recognizing communities as first responders and enabling their engagement through inclusive, accountable, and participatory mechanisms enhances the effectiveness of disaster risk management efforts and ensures that solutions are locally grounded and sustainable. As the risks facing Pakistan continue to grow, putting communities at the heart of disaster management is both a strategic and ethical imperative.

2.2. Role of NDMA in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

The National Disaster Management Authority[7] is the primary agency responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and implementing disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster management activities across Pakistan. Established under the National Disaster Management Ordinance of 2006 and formalized through the National Disaster Management Act of 2010, NDMA operates at federal, provincial, and district levels through its subsidiary bodies, including Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) [8]-[9].

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[1] Pakistan - Vulnerability | Climate Change Knowledge Portal
[2] National Disaster Management Plan 2025
[3] Devastating floods in Pakistan | UNICEF
[4] Pakistan And History Of Disasters
[5] Climate Resilient Pakistan, Year Book 2022-23
[6] Pakistandrmstatusreport.pdf
[7] National Disaster Management Authority (Pakistan) - Wikipedia
[8] NDMA Input for Asean Regional Forum 2018
[9] National Disaster Management Plan August 2012

NDMA's mandate includes formulating policies, plans, and guidelines for disaster management; coordinating with national and international stakeholders for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; building institutional and community capacities for disaster risk reduction; promoting research, innovation, and the use of technology in disaster management; and ensuring the integration of disaster risk reduction into development planning.

As part of its commitment to building a resilient Pakistan, NDMA recognizes the critical role of communities in disaster management and seeks to empower them through meaningful engagement and participation. This approach acknowledges that communities are often the first responders during disasters and play a vital role in disaster risk reduction efforts.

2.3. Community and Community Engagement

A community is the smallest relevant social unit beyond the household, including neighbourhoods (*Mohallas*), villages, or non-geographic social networks (e.g., diaspora, peer groups, kinship ties). It plays a key role in distributing resources and knowledge across health, education, economy, and culture[10]. Communities are diverse, with varying levels of authority, access, and decision-making power influenced by factors like gender, ethnicity, ability, and religion.

Community Engagement (CE) strengthens collaboration among traditional, civil, and government groups, empowering local networks, enhancing participation, ownership, and communication. It enables communities to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate actions that support survival, development, and well-being[11]. Effective community engagement in humanitarian contexts builds on acceptance, trust, and partnership between humanitarian actors and affected populations[12]. Meaningful community involvement builds trust, reduces resistance, and ensures programs are relevant and effective. It fosters lasting behaviour change, empowers local action, and strengthens resilience for future shocks.

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[10] Minimum Standards for Community Engagement, UNICEF
[11] Community Engagement, UNICEF

[12] Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action TOOLKIT

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

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Two-Way Communication

"Effective community engagement is built on two-way communication that is transparent, respectful, and responsive to community feedback."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

3. Purpose, Objectives and Methods

3.1. Purpose

The Community Engagement Guidelines provide a standardized framework for inclusive and effective engagement in disaster risk contexts across Pakistan. They offer practical tools and clear guidance for involving communities throughout the preparedness, response, and recovery phases. The guidelines promote collaboration among NDMA, local authorities, humanitarian partners, and communities, with an emphasis on locally led, participatory approaches that are gender-responsive and culturally sensitive. By prioritizing the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, the guidelines help ensure that no one is left behind in disaster risk management.

3.2. Objectives of the Guidelines

The CE guidelines provide a standardized framework to strengthen community engagement in disaster risk contexts across Pakistan. The key objectives are:

- Enable communities to actively participate in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Ensure marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are meaningfully involved in disaster planning and decision-making.
- Establish effective two-way culturally appropriate communication channels for early warnings, information sharing, and community feedback.
- Empower communities with knowledge, skills, and resources to reduce risks and recover effectively from disasters.
- Integrate community engagement as a core component of NDMA's disaster management policies and practices.

3.3. Methods

These guidelines were developed through a rigorous, evidence-based process to ensure their relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with global best practices, while addressing Pakistan's specific disaster management needs. The process included a comprehensive desk review of international and national frameworks, case studies, and grey literature from sources such as UNDRR, UNICEF, WHO, and IFRC. Insights were analyzed and adapted to suit Pakistan's diverse socio-economic and geographical context, with practical recommendations tailored for use by government agencies, humanitarian actors, and community stakeholders.

3.4. Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) outlines a pathway to institutionalize inclusive community engagement as a cornerstone of disaster risk reduction policies. It emphasizes integrating engagement into national/local plans (e.g., NDMA/PDMA/DDMA), strengthening two-way communication (e.g., early warning systems, feedback mechanisms), and ensuring marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities, and elderly) actively participate in decision-making. Key strategies include institutionalizing CE into policies, training community leaders and officials, forming inclusive committees, and establishing coordination forums to bridge gaps between institutions and communities. The ultimate goal is to foster local ownership, address structural barriers, and build trust through transparent, gender-sensitive, and participatory approaches, leading to more resilient and equitable disaster preparedness and response (Annex 3).

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Localization & Community Ownership

"Communities are not passive recipients but active agents in disaster management. Local knowledge and practices should be valued and incorporated into planning and response."

— Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025

4. Principles of Community Engagement

The following CE principles[13] are aligned with international frameworks and promote a rights-based, inclusive, and empowering approach.

They emphasize equity, diversity, accessibility, and the strengthening of local capacities and should be contextualized and reflected in community engagement practices across Pakistan.

Table 1. Fundamental Principles for Community Engagement Standards

Principles	Description
Rights-Based Approach	A human rights-based approach embeds international norms in development and humanitarian policies, ensuring equity, accountability, and meaningful participation.
Community-based approaches	Community-based approaches empower individuals to voice their needs, prioritize local decision-making, and leverage traditional cooperation, fostering dignity, self-reliance, and sustainable solutions.
Gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming promotes equality by integrating gender analysis and perspectives into all activities, including policy, research, advocacy, legislation, resource allocation, and program planning, implementation, and monitoring.
Accountability	Development and humanitarian actors must be accountable to local populations for their actions, priorities, and resource allocation[14]. Governments play a key role in fostering accountability through community engagement structures and systems.
Best interests of the child	The "best interests of the child," rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, mandates that all actions affecting children by institutions, or authorities must prioritize their well-being as a primary consideration.
Do not harm	The "Do No Harm" principle in community engagement promotes ownership and capacity while minimizing risks like discrimination, inequality, stigmatization, and data privacy breaches.

4.1. Community Engagement in the Risk Context

Community engagement in the disaster risk context refers to the active involvement of individuals, groups, and organizations within a community in the planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of disaster-related activities[15].

This collaborative process fosters trust and mutual respect between communities and disaster management authorities, enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of disaster preparedness and response efforts. Community engagement is not a one-time activity but a continuous process that strengthens community resilience and ensures that disaster management efforts are locally relevant and sustainable.

In the disaster risk context, community engagement encompasses several key components:

- Participation[16]: Actively involving community members in risk assessments, planning, and decision-making processes ensures that disaster management strategies are tailored to local needs and conditions.

[13] Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement
[14] Gender based violence in humanitarian assistance
[15] Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience
[16] Community_led_partnership_JUNE24.pdf

- Empowerment[17]: Building the capacity of communities to take ownership of disaster risk reduction and response efforts enables them to manage and mitigate disaster risks effectively.

- Communication[18]: Establishing open and transparent channels for sharing information, providing early warnings, and gathering feedback is crucial for timely and effective disaster response.

- Inclusivity: Ensuring that the voices of all community members including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups are heard and addressed promotes equitable and comprehensive disaster management.

Figure 2. Community Engagement in Disaster Management

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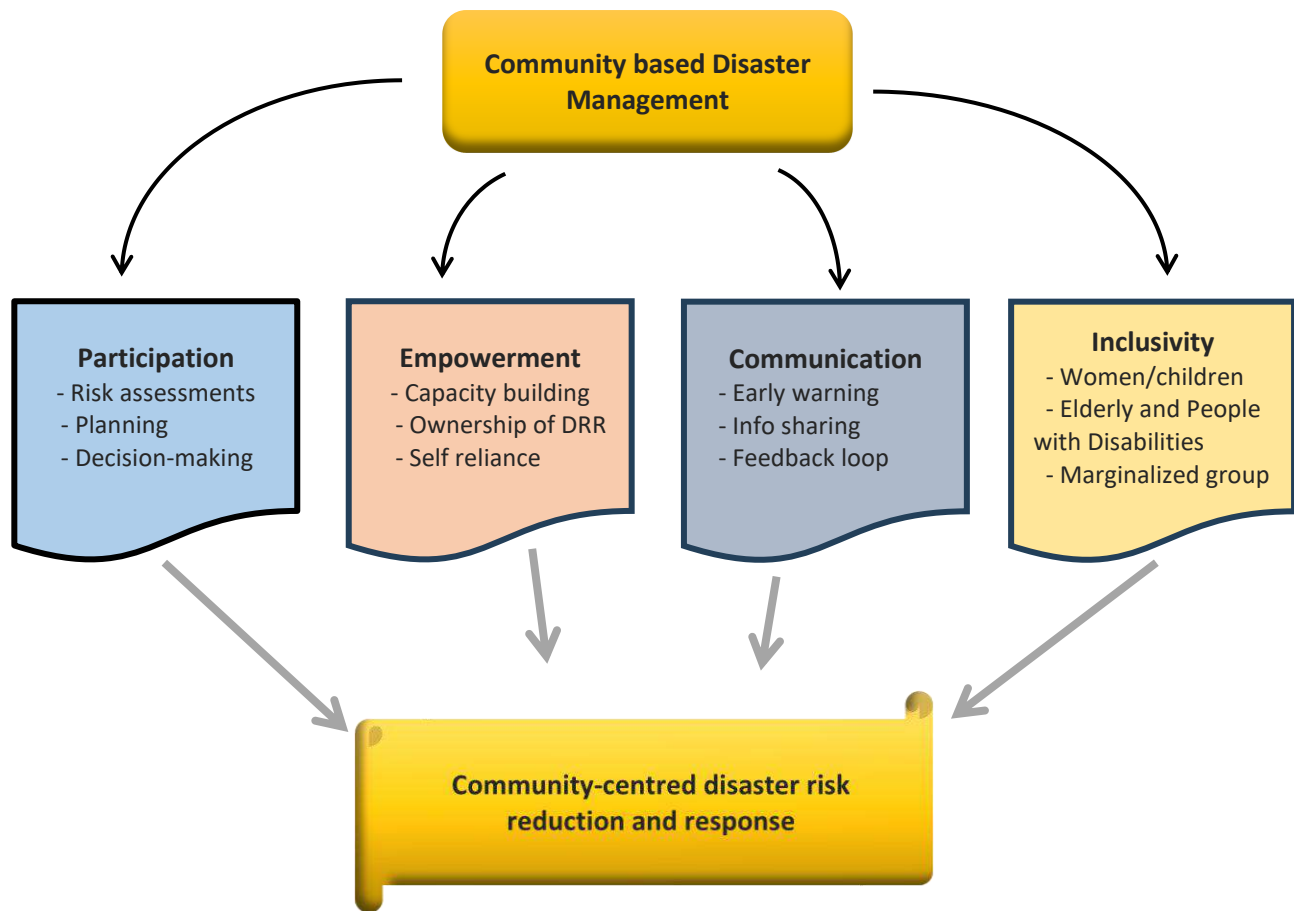
[17] Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction – 2015-2030
[18] A Guide To Community Engagement - January 2023

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

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Leveraging Community Structures

"Strong responses rely on strong relationships. Working through trusted community structures creates legitimacy and accelerates impact."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

5. National and International Frameworks Supporting Community Engagement

Community engagement in disaster risk context is supported by robust legal and policy frameworks at both national and international levels. These frameworks provide the foundation for integrating community participation into disaster risk contexts in Pakistan.

Below are the key frameworks:

Table 2. Community Engagement Frameworks

International frameworks	Key focus	Community engagement aspects	Reference
International Standards			
IASC Commitments on AAP (2011) [19]	Enhancing humanitarian response through accountability.	Community participation in decision-making, feedback mechanisms, and transparency.	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
Core Humanitarian Standards (2014) [20]	Ensuring quality, accountability, and transparency in aid.	Community-centred approach, integration across field operations, and active feedback loops	The core humanitarian standards
Grand Bargain[21] Commitments	The Grand Bargain Workstream-6 promotes community engagement through feedback, accountability, and inclusion	It also highlights the importance of two-way communication, fostering continuous dialogue between communities and humanitarian actors.	The Grand Bargain
Community Engagement Minimum Standards[22]	UNICEF's CEMS offers a unified framework for effective community engagement in crises, built on 16 core standards and six guiding principles	It emphasizes participatory, locally led approaches to strengthen community ownership, accountability, and transparent resource use.	Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement
Sphere Standards (1997, updated 2018) [23]	Setting global benchmarks for quality humanitarian response.	Participation, consultation, and inclusion of marginalized groups.	The Sphere Standards
Sendai Framework for DRR (2015-2030) [24]	Reducing disaster risks and building resilience.	Inclusive, locally led DRR, traditional knowledge integration, and community empowerment.	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015) [25]	Global agenda for sustainable development.	Goals 11 & 13 emphasize community-based climate adaptation and resilience.	UN Sustainable Development

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[19] AAP Operational Framework
[20] The core humanitarian standards
[21] The Grand Bargain
[22] Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement
[23] The Sphere Standards
[24] Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030
[25] UN Sustainable Development.

National frameworks			
National Disaster Management Plan 2025	Strengthening disaster resilience through risk reduction, climate adaptation, emergency preparedness, and inclusive engagement	Awareness and education, Community based disaster risk management, Participatory early warning system, Inclusive approach, Public Private Partnership	National Disaster Management Plan 2025
National Disaster Management Act (2010) [26]	Legal framework for DRR, preparedness, and response.	Community participation in planning, awareness programs, and disaster committees.	NDMA Act 2010
National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2013) [27]	Framework for reducing disaster risks.	Community involvement in risk assessments, disaster committees, and training programs.	National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy
National Climate Change Policy (2021) [28]	Addressing climate-related hazards.	Community-based adaptation strategies and capacity-building programs.	National Climate Change Policy Pakistan

[26] NDMA Act 2010
[27] National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy
[28] National Climate Change Policy Pakistan

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

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Partner Coordination

"When partners coordinate, communities benefit. Harmonized engagement reduces duplication, builds trust, and drives collective progress."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

6. Key Stakeholders in Community Engagement

Identifying key stakeholders is critical to the success and sustainability of community engagement efforts in Pakistan[29]. Meaningful collaboration ensures coordinated action, resource optimization, and inclusive responses. Key stakeholders include:

6.1. Local Communities

Local communities are central to development efforts, as their involvement ensures relevance, cultural appropriateness, and responsiveness to real needs. In Pakistan, their local knowledge is vital for achieving effective and sustainable outcomes.

6.2. Local Government Authorities

Municipal and district-level officials are essential for implementing and overseeing community projects. Their collaboration ensures alignment with local policies and plans. In Pakistan, PDMAs and DDMAs are key partners in disaster management and community development.

6.3. Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) represent diverse segments of society. In Pakistan, organizations such as the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), Aurat Foundation, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), international NGOs, and UN agencies play a critical role as intermediaries between communities and other stakeholders. They ensure that marginalized voices are heard and included in decision-making processes, promoting equitable and inclusive development.

6.4. Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in community development and empowerment across Pakistan. Organizations such as NRSP, AKRSP, and Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) have extensive experience in mobilizing communities and implementing development projects. International NGOs like the Red Crescent and UN agencies also contribute expertise and resources to support local initiatives.

6.5. Private Sector

The private sector brings valuable resources, expertise, and innovation to community initiatives. In Pakistan, corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts by companies like Engro, Nestlé, and Telenor have supported education, health, and disaster relief. Their engagement fosters sustainable development and local opportunities.

6.6. Academia and Research Institutions

Universities and think tanks—such as SDPI and PIDE—offer research, data analysis, and evidence-based recommendations that strengthen community initiatives. Their involvement ensures programs are informed by scientific insight and adapted to local contexts.

6.7. Media

In Pakistan, local and national media—through television, radio, and digital platforms—play a key role in raising awareness, sharing information, and promoting accountability. For detailed roles across disaster phases, see Annex 1.

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[29] Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030

TOOLS FOR
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Gender Sensitivity and Inclusivity

"Inclusive engagement is not optional, it is essential. Gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive approaches strengthen resilience for all."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

7. Tools for Community Engagement

Effective community engagement is critical to inclusive and accountable disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery. Involving communities in identifying needs, shaping solutions, and providing feedback not only improves program relevance and effectiveness but also fosters ownership, trust, and sustainability. To support meaningful and inclusive engagement, this section outlines a set of tools that can be used in the Pakistani context. These tools are categorized into two key types:

- **Interpersonal Tools:** Based on face-to-face, participatory methods that build trust and facilitate local ownership.
- **Digital Tools:** Technology-based platforms that enhance reach, timeliness, and two-way communication—especially in emergency settings.

7.1. Interpersonal Community Engagement Tools

The following are key interpersonal communication tools for engaging with community:

7.1.1. Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)[30] is a human-centred approach that empowers communities to identify issues, implement solutions, and monitor progress using their own knowledge. Tools such as social mapping, seasonal calendars, and wealth ranking foster inclusive engagement, especially in disaster-prone areas like Sindh and Punjab. PRA supports locally adapted disaster risk reduction strategies and promotes ownership by involving women, children, and persons with disabilities.

7.1.2. Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)[31] are structured conversations with 6-8 participants, guided by a facilitator to explore specific topics in depth. They are particularly effective for discussing disaster-related issues like evacuation plans, safety measures, and recovery efforts. Facilitators ensure that all voices are heard, capturing community perceptions and experiences that may be missed in surveys. FGDs foster open dialogue, providing nuanced insights that inform effective and inclusive disaster management strategies.

7.1.3. Community Meetings and Workshops

Community meetings and workshops bring members together to discuss issues, share information, and develop solutions. They foster transparency, collective problem-solving, and consensus-building. After a disaster, workshops can guide communities on accessing relief services and rebuilding to reduce future risks. These forums also help identify local resources and networks to support disaster response.

7.1.4. Traditional Communication Methods

Traditional methods like radio broadcasts, and local announcements, remain effective, especially in rural areas. They ensure inclusivity by reaching those without digital access, bridging communication gaps. In flood-prone regions, local radio stations can broadcast disaster warnings and evacuation guidance, while community loudspeakers inform residents of emergency meetings and necessary actions, ensuring timely information for all.

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[30] Participatory Rural Appraisal – Participedia
[31] Using Focus Groups in Community-Based Participatory Research: Challenges and Resolutions

7.1.5. Volunteer Network

Volunteer networks play a vital role in disaster preparedness and response by mobilizing local volunteers. In Pakistan, networks like the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and community health workers support preparedness activities, including surveys and early warning message distribution. During disasters, they provide hands-on assistance, such as distributing relief materials and offering first aid.

7.2. Digital Tools for Community Engagement

Digital technologies offer significant opportunities to enhance the reach, speed, and inclusivity of community engagement, particularly in humanitarian settings where timely communication and accountability are critical[32]. NDMA has proactively adopted digital tools to enhance community engagement and disaster response across Pakistan. A notable initiative is the Pak NDMA Disaster Alert App[33], a mobile application that provides geo-tagged alerts and guidance in both national and provincial languages, utilizing audio and video formats to ensure timely risk communication and effective community engagement. Moreover, NDMA's collaboration with MILKAR.com[34], a tech-based interactive platform, facilitates the engagement of registered volunteers in disaster risk reduction and response activities, enabling the dissemination of advisories, early warnings, best practices, and public service messages to thousands of volunteers and organizations. Building upon these foundational efforts, NDMA and partners can further enhance community engagement during emergencies by integrating the following digital tools:

7.2.1. **Mobile-Based Feedback & Data Collection Tools**: Platforms like Kobo Toolbox, and Open Data Kit (ODK) enable real-time feedback and complaint tracking, even in remote and offline settings. These tools support disaggregated data (e.g., by gender, age) and multilingual surveys.

7.2.2. **Interactive Voice Response (IVR) & Hotlines**: IVR systems, such as Viamo's 321 Service, allow communities to access life-saving information and leave voice feedback. These are especially effective in low-literacy and rural populations.

7.2.3. **WhatsApp, SMS & Social Messaging**: Widely used across Pakistan, these platforms facilitate trusted, two-way communication for behaviour change, alerts, and group-based dialogue. SMS enables mass outreach to communities in remote locations, including those with limited access to smartphones.

7.2.4. **Social Media Platforms & Analytics**: Utilizing platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) helps disseminate targeted messages and monitor public sentiment. In-built analytics can track reach, engagement, and adaptation needs.

7.2.5. **Real-Time Dashboards & Feedback Loops**: Digital dashboards support timely decision-making by visualizing complaint trends, resolution status, and program impact. These tools also strengthen transparency and help close the feedback loop with communities.

7.2.6. **Hybrid Approaches (Radio + Mobile)**: Integrating radio broadcasts with SMS polls or call-in shows allows for broader reach in low-connectivity areas while maintaining interactive engagement.

However, the effective use of digital tools requires careful consideration of several factors, including promoting digital inclusion by addressing barriers such as gender inequality, low literacy, limited connectivity, and affordability; ensuring secure and responsible data management; building the capacity of frontline staff and volunteers; and involving communities in co-design processes to ensure tools are relevant, accessible, and user-friendly.

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[32] Digital SBC Approach
[33] Pak NDMA Disaster Alert App
[34] NDMA MILKAR.com, a tech-based platform

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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Monitoring and Evaluation

"Monitoring and evaluation are not just about tracking progress, they are about listening, learning, and adapting with the communities we serve. In community engagement, M&E must be participatory, inclusive, and rooted in accountability."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of CE ensures accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in how communities are informed, consulted, and empowered in humanitarian planning and response[35]. Establishing a robust M&E framework enables evidence-based decision-making, highlights progress, identifies gaps, and ensures that community voices shape emergency response strategies at all levels.

The M&E is designed to systematically track the implementation of CE interventions and assess their fidelity, reach, and effectiveness. It aims to monitor the quality and consistency of community feedback mechanisms across provinces, ensuring they remain inclusive and responsive. The framework also supports the generation of behavioural and perception data to inform and adapt strategies in real-time.

By leveraging community insights and satisfaction data, it facilitates evidence-based decision-making and timely course correction. Furthermore, the CE M&E framework promotes institutional learning and standardization of community engagement practices by providing common tools, benchmarks, and indicators across programmes and partners.

8.1. Core Components of the CE M&E System

Below are the core components of M&E:

8.1.1. Planning and Implementation Monitoring
- Track the delivery of CE activities: What is being done, by whom, where, and how often.
- Monitor fidelity to CE Minimum Quality Standards (CEMS) and integration into program cycles.
- Use tools such as facilitator checklists, session reports, and CE activity trackers.

8.1.2. Supportive Supervision and Quality Assurance
- Deploy trained supervisors to assess CE sessions using structured observation checklists.
- Provide constructive feedback to community facilitators and partners for improvement.
- Ensure supervisors are guided by a clear protocol and use harmonized monitoring tools.

8.1.3. Trend Monitoring
- Track shifts in community attitudes, trust levels, and satisfaction with services over time.
- Use both feedback data (e.g., from complaint boxes, hotlines, face to face communication) and routine monitoring to identify trends.
- Include basic demographic disaggregation (e.g., gender, age, vulnerability) to ensure inclusiveness.

8.1.4. Periodic Behavioural Evidence Generation
- Conduct rapid assessments, focus groups, and in-depth interviews to capture behavioural drivers and social norms.
- Document enablers and barriers to community engagement and feedback usage.
- Use findings to tailor CE strategies and improve service delivery at provincial and national levels.

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[35] SBC Monitoring and Evaluation Framework-UNICEF Bangladesh.pdf

Table 3. Example Indicators for Monitoring Community Engagement

Domain	Example Indicators
Reach and Participation	Percent of targeted communities reached. No. of CE sessions conducted No. of volunteers trained
Inclusion	Percent of sessions engaging women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups
Feedback Mechanism Usage	No. and type of feedback received. Percent of feedback responded to
Quality and Effectiveness	Percent of CE sessions meeting community engagement minimum standards; community satisfaction rating
Behavioural Impact (longer-term)	Percent of community members reporting improved understanding or trust in authorities

CORE STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Trust Building

"Trust is the foundation of effective community engagement. It is earned through consistency, transparency, and delivering on commitments."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

9. Core Standards for Effective Community Engagement

Community Engagement is at the heart of effective humanitarian and development programming. It is both a right and a responsibility, ensuring that people affected by crisis or living in poverty and vulnerability have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Whether responding to emergencies or fostering long-term development, CE strengthens trust, improves program relevance, promotes transparency, and ultimately leads to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes. Its role becomes even more crucial in fragile contexts, where power imbalances, marginalization, and unmet needs are heightened. Community Engagement, when implemented meaningfully, contributes to dignity, accountability, and resilience.

9.1. Community Engagement in Humanitarian Context

In humanitarian settings where urgency, disruption, and vulnerability dominate, CE becomes a life-saving approach that positions affected people not merely as recipients of aid/assistance, but as active agents in the response. Engagement in such contexts must be rapid, inclusive, and tailored to the evolving needs and complexities of the crisis. At times of upheaval, the ability to listen to communities, adapt based on their feedback, and provide timely, actionable information is critical to both effectiveness and trust. Accountability to Affected People (AAP) operationalizes this commitment by ensuring that communities remain at the centre of all interventions.

9.1.1. Accountability to Affected People

AAP is a foundational principle that ensures the voices, rights, and needs of communities are central to humanitarian action. AAP is operationalized through meaningful and inclusive community engagement, which becomes a cornerstone for effective emergency response.

AAP is driven by three core standards:

- **Information Provision:** Timely, accurate, and culturally relevant information enables communities to make informed decisions. Messaging must be clear, accessible, and delivered in local languages through trusted channels.

- **Participation:** Communities, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups, must be meaningfully involved throughout the programme cycle from assessment to implementation and evaluation. Participation ensures responses are grounded in real needs and capacities.

- **Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms:** Feedback mechanisms[36] empower communities to share concerns and suggestions, ensuring responsive and inclusive engagement. Two-way communication builds trust, improves program relevance, and strengthens accountability. Tools include surveys, focus groups, suggestion boxes, hotlines, and trained community volunteers providing accessible, confidential, and culturally appropriate channels for input, especially in remote or low-literacy areas.

These three pillars lay the groundwork for responsive, ethical, and inclusive humanitarian action, helping to safeguard dignity and promote trust between affected populations and humanitarian actors.

9.2. Community Engagement in Humanitarian - Development Contexts

In integrated humanitarian-development contexts especially in protracted crises and post-disaster recovery settings community engagement must go beyond immediate needs and actively support resilience, inclusion, and long-term change. Here, CE becomes a strategic enabler of systems

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[36] Community Feedback Mechanism

strengthening, localization, and social accountability. It helps governments and organizations transition from short-term relief to long-term development, with communities at the centre of planning, delivery, and monitoring.

To operationalize CE across both humanitarian and development domains, a broader set of community engagement standards has been established[37]. These complement the core AAP pillars and offer a comprehensive framework:

9.2.1. Participation

➢ *The initiative should ensure meaningful participation of communities, including vulnerable groups across all phases of governance, development, and humanitarian efforts. Communities must be engaged in assessing their needs and involved in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, with their priorities reflected in policy, research, and practice.*

➢ In the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Program in the Philippines, the government actively engages local communities in disaster preparedness and response planning, ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women and children, in decision-making (UNISDR, 2015).

9.2.2. Empowerment & Ownership

➢ *Programmes should engage local leadership and communities in planning, implementation, and monitoring, ensuring shared decision-making and alignment with local priorities. Community engagement should foster ownership and view empowerment as both a process and an outcome.*

➢ India's Mahila Gram Sabhas[38] and Bangladesh's Children's Advisory Committees[39] empower women and children in decision-making. In Pakistan, BISP empowers women through cash transfers, while RSPN enables rural communities to lead their own development. These initiatives promote community ownership and participation. Similarly, involving religious leaders in public health campaigns, as seen in Sierra Leone's Ebola response[40], and Haiti's post-earthquake recovery[41] builds trust, ownership and community acceptance.

9.2.3. Inclusion

➢ *Community engagement processes should identify and overcome barriers to the participation of underrepresented and marginalized groups such as women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, elderly, and the poor ensuring their voices are included in all stages.*

➢ The World Bank's Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach in Nepal empowers vulnerable groups, including women, in development projects, benefiting 2.8 million people. Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) ensures marginalized groups, especially rural women, actively participate in decision-making through grievance redressal mechanisms.

9.2.4. Two-way Communication

➢ *Communities should have regular two-way communication to ensure participation and access to information. A communication plan must inform communities about project goals and methods, while helping organizations understand local structures. Clear communication lines, feedback*

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[37] Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement
[38] Best-Practices-Case-Studies030523.pdf
[39] Partnerships | UNICEF
[40] The impact of traditional and religious practices on the spread of Ebola in West Africa: time for a strategic shift - PMC
[41] Coordinating the earthquake response: lessons from Leogane, western Haiti | Humanitarian Practice Network

mechanisms, and a transparent, safe process for complaints should be in place, supported by culturally appropriate offline and digital platforms[42].

➢ Lessons from the Ebola response[43-44] in West Africa highlight the importance of robust two-way community feedback systems in addressing misinformation and building trust. In Pakistan, the Polio Eradication Initiative effectively used religious leaders, influencers, and health workers to share information and gather feedback, boosting community engagement and vaccine acceptance.

9.2.5. Adaptability and Localization

➢ *Community engagement approaches should be developed based on local contexts, ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to the needs, conditions, and concerns of local populations. Programs must include plans to address local issues, with consultations to assess needs and priorities. Tools and strategies should be tailored to local contexts, using participatory, two-way communication.*

➢ Internationally, the World Bank's Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach in Nepal and Bangladesh's Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) model exemplify adaptable, localized engagement strategies that respond to unique community needs. In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) tailors its initiatives to the needs of marginalized rural women, while the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) involves local leaders to ensure projects align with community priorities.

9.2.6. Building on Local Capacities

➢ *Community engagement should leverage the existing skills and resources of local communities, groups, and organizations. Strategies must ensure that community stakeholders and local organizations are provided with the necessary support and skills to effectively implement initiatives.*

➢ Building on successful models like Kudumbashree in India, Pakistan can enhance local capacities by scaling up women's economic empowerment through programs such as the Benazir Income Support Program[45,] which focuses on microfinance and skill-building initiatives. These efforts can strengthen women's leadership in community-based projects, particularly in rural and underserved areas. By building local capacities, programs like cash-based aid are more effective when paired with community-led communication strategies, ensuring greater engagement, ownership, and long-term impact[46].

9.2.7. Leveraging Community Structures

➢ *Utilizing established community networks and structures can enhance the reach and effectiveness of interventions.*

➢ Existing structures like Pakistan's village health committees can be leveraged for participatory approaches like the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) model. Past flood responses in Pakistan highlight the need to build on trusted local networks and knowledge. For example, cash-

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[42] CHS. The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.
[43] Real-Time Ebola Community Feedback Mechanism
[44] Using Community Feedback to Guide the COVID-19 Response
[45] The Impacts of Cash Transfers on Women's Empowerment: Learning from Pakistan's BISP Program
[46] https://www.cdacnetwork.org/resources/lessons-on-communication-community-engagement-and-accountability-for-the-pakistan-floods-response

based aid programs are more effective when paired with community-led communication strategies[47].

9.2.8. Gender Sensitivity and Inclusivity

➢ *Integrating gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches into disaster management is crucial for building resilience and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.*

➢ In Pakistan, the Lady Health Workers program and Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) empower women and persons with disabilities to actively participate in health service delivery and disaster preparedness (UNICEF Pakistan, 2021; NDMA, 2022). Global examples further highlight the importance of inclusion, such as Cameroon's disability-inclusive efforts[48,] which ensure that persons with disabilities are fully integrated into disaster response planning, and Ethiopia's maternal health programs[49], which combine traditional practices with modern healthcare to improve accessibility and health outcomes.

9.2.9. Partner Coordination

➢ *Effective coordination of community engagement optimizes resources, prevents duplication, and ensures a unified approach. Partners should map activities, share responsibilities, and establish a national working group with clear operational guidelines. Risk analysis and mitigation should ensure that coordination efforts do not compromise the safety of vulnerable populations.*

➢ Internationally, examples like the IASC Humanitarian Coordination during the Ebola outbreak and the Philippines Typhoon Haiyan[50] response highlight the importance of coordination through working groups, like the AAP Working Group, to optimize resources, prevent duplication, and ensure community needs are met. In Pakistan, during the COVID-19 response, UNICEF Pakistan coordinated with local authorities and NGOs through a COVID-19 Task Force to streamline efforts, focusing on marginalized populations, minimizing overlap, and ensuring efficient resource use.

9.2.10. Informed Design

➢ *Informed design ensures context-appropriate community engagement by aligning with local realities, international standards, and government strategies. It involves diverse stakeholders, uses data and feedback, and requires flexibility, resources, and clear guidelines for inclusive participation.*

➢ For example, tailoring health communication strategies, such as storytelling and culturally relevant media, can resonate more effectively with local communities. For instance, Pakistan can adapt the approach of India's Tribal Health and Nutrition Program[51] to design culturally sensitive campaigns for maternal and child health or nutrition interventions in tribal and remote regions.

9.2.11. Integration

➢ *Community engagement should be integrated and harmonized within the development and humanitarian architecture in any given context. At programmatic level, community engagement should be mainstreamed across all sectors to ensure participation and to improve effectiveness.*

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[47] https://www.cdacnetwork.org/resources/lessons-on-communication-community-engagement-and-accountability-for-the-pakistan-floods-response

[48] https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cbm-leads-disability-inclusive-humanitarian-training-cameroon?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[49] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9123652/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[50] Evaluation report, Typhoon Haiyan UNOCHA

[51] Exploring Maternal and Child Health Among Tribal Communities in India: A Life Course Perspective

➢ The IASC Guidelines for Community Engagement and Grand Bargain[52] commitments emphasize the integration of community engagement across both humanitarian and development programming. These frameworks advocate for mainstreaming engagement in all sectors to ensure effective participation, improve outcomes, and align efforts across programmatic and sectoral work (IASC, 2020; Grand Bargain, 2016).

Figure 3: Core standards for effective community engagement

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[52] The Grand Bargain

MINIMUM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

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Accountability to Affected People

"AAP is not a peripheral concern; it is the foundation of humanitarian action. When communities are meaningfully engaged, their voices shape the response, their rights are upheld, and their needs drive every decision."

— Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025

10.   Minimum Community Engagement Interventions

In disaster-prone contexts like Pakistan, these minimum community engagement interventions can serve as a practical guideline for government and partners to ensure inclusive, coordinated, and accountable action throughout the emergency cycle. These interventions outline the essential CE actions[53] needed during preparedness and response to strengthen participation, trust, and effectiveness in risk settings.

The following table outlines the minimum CE actions to be undertaken during both the preparedness and response phases of disaster management.

Table 4. Minimum Community Engagement Interventions in Emergency Phases

Minimum CE Interventions	Emergency Phases	Key Activities
Risk Analysis and Social Data	Preparedness	• Conduct Social and Behavioural Vulnerability Analysis (SBVA) aligned with risk assessments. • Map community structures, trusted leaders, and communication channels. • Identify vulnerable groups (gender, age, disability). • Identify national/subnational disaster actors, map CE/RCCE platforms, existing coordination mechanism
Advocacy and Institutionalization	Preparedness	• Advocate for CE integration in National Disaster Management Plans. • Engage policymakers, DMAs, and HCT for CE commitments.
Institutional Capacity and Capability Development	Preparedness /Response	• Conduct rapid capacity and capability assessment of potential and existing partners on IPC, and CE, SBC to identify competencies of service providers, partners and their networks of community mobilizers to be able to respond in times of crisis. • Conduct orientation sessions for Gov't, CSOs, FBOs and partners to equip with knowledge and skills on CE, SBC tools and operational approaches to plan, implement and report the interventions.
Coordination Mechanism	Preparedness	• Establish CE/AAP/SBC Coordination Group under government/HCT. • Define roles (e.g., info hubs, feedback systems). • Train local partners on CE standards (CEMS/CHS).
Community Feedback Systems	Preparedness	• Set up rumour tracking and pre-crisis feedback channels (hotlines, radio, SMS). • Pilot-test messages for hazards.

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[53] Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action

Disseminate Life Saving Information	Response	• Disseminate contextualized messages via trusted channels (local media, leaders). • Counter misinformation through rapid rumour management.
Need Assessment and Participation	Response	• Integrate CE/SBC questions in Joint Needs Assessments. • Involve communities in HNO (humanitarian needs overview) analysis and response planning.
Feedback & Complaints Mechanisms	Response	• Deploy interactive platforms (hotlines, help desks and community centres). • Ensure safe reporting for SEA/sensitive issues. • Close feedback loops with communities.
Sector-Specific CE Actions	Response	• Align CE with clusters (WASH, Health, Protection). • Promote protective behaviours (e.g., hygiene, child safety). • Strengthen local capacities (e.g., volunteers, women's groups).
Monitoring & Accountability	Response	• Track CE indicators (participation, feedback resolution). • Document human-interest stories for learning.

LESSONS LEARNED
AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Adaptability and Localization

"No one-size-fits-all solution exists. Community engagement must be rooted in local realities, adaptable to change, and responsive to evolving needs."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

11.   Lessons Learned and Key Recommendations

➕ **Ensuring Inclusive Participation**

- **Lessons Learned:** Actively engaging marginalized groups (e.g., women, children, persons with disabilities) ensures disaster management plans address diverse needs.

- *Best Practices:* Countries like the Philippines and Indonesia involve marginalized communities in disaster risk assessments and decision-making (UNDRR, 2020).

- **Recommendation:** Develop national guidelines for community engagement in disaster management that prioritize inclusivity at all stages. Actively involve marginalized groups such as women, children, and persons with disabilities and promote gender-sensitive planning to ensure disaster responses address diverse community needs.

➕ **Building Trust Through Local Leadership**

- **Lessons Learned:** Engaging local leaders, religious figures, and traditional healers fosters trust and culturally appropriate messaging in disaster management.

- *Best Practices:* During the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, community leaders promoted health measures, while in Pakistan, religious leaders supported the Polio Eradication Campaign, countering vaccine hesitancy and building community trust.

- **Recommendation:** Leverage local leaders, including religious figures and community influencers, to foster trust and enhance disaster response through culturally relevant messaging and community-led initiatives.

➕ **Integrating Culturally Adaptive Approaches**

- **Lessons Learned:** Adapting community engagement strategies to local cultural contexts during emergency response enhances community acceptance and participation.

- *Best Practices:* In Vanuatu, integrating indigenous cyclone prediction methods (e.g., animal behaviour, wind patterns) and community-led communication into early warning systems significantly improved evacuation compliance during Cyclone Pam (2015).

- **Recommendation:** Develop CE strategies that align with local cultural, social, and economic contexts, incorporating traditional knowledge to ensure effective, culturally relevant risk reduction and recovery plans.

➕ **Promoting Community Ownership for Lasting Sustainability**

- **Lessons Learned:** Empowering communities to take ownership of disaster preparedness and recovery builds long-term resilience.

- *Best Practices:* Bangladesh's CLTS program eliminated open defecation through community-driven initiatives, while the Aga Khan Development Network's disaster risk reduction programs in Gilgit-Baltistan strengthened local capacity to manage risks.

- **Recommendation:** Foster long-term community engagement by supporting ongoing, community-driven initiatives and strengthening resilience through local development programs. This approach not only empowers communities but also builds sustained trust and enhances their capacity to respond to future disasters.

Establishing Transparent Two-way Communication

- **Lessons Learned:** Establishing transparent and responsive communication channels ensures communities are informed and can provide feedback.

- *Best Practices:* Sierra Leone's SMS platforms during the Ebola outbreak enabled real-time feedback, while Pakistan's COVID-19 response utilized hotlines and community meetings for accurate information sharing.

- **Recommendation:** Implement culturally appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms i.e., hotlines, complaint boxes, digital platforms, and volunteer-led communication to ensure accessibility, transparency, and trust. These systems capture community voices and integrate them into response efforts, enhancing program effectiveness and community empowerment.

Building Local Capacities

- **Lessons Learned:** Training communities and local authorities in disaster preparedness and response improves risk management.

- *Best Practices:* India's Kudumbashree Women's Network empowered women through leadership training, while Pakistan's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) strengthened local response capabilities by equipping volunteers with essential skills. Learn from Bangladesh's Cyclone Preparedness Program and adapt similar models to local disaster response efforts.

- **Recommendation:** Implement comprehensive training programs on disaster preparedness, first aid, and early warning systems to strengthen community resilience and response capacity, ensuring faster, more effective responses during emergencies and reducing vulnerability to disasters.

Strengthening Coordination Among Stakeholders

- **Lessons Learned:** Successful disaster responses globally highlight that strong coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and humanitarian actors prevents duplication and ensures efficient resource allocation.

- *Best Practices:* During the 2015 Nepal earthquake, coordinated efforts between government agencies and international partners facilitated effective disaster relief. In contrast, the lack of coordination during the 2010 Haiti earthquake led to inefficiencies and overlapping interventions.

- **Recommendation:** Establish or enhance collaboration platforms like CE/AAP working groups. Engage NDMA, local authorities, NGOs, and community representatives to ensure coordinated efforts, avoid duplication, and enhance resource mapping and information sharing.

Utilizing Digital Technology for Engagement

- **Lessons Learned:** Digital technologies enhance the reach, efficiency, and inclusivity of community engagement in emergencies.

- *Best Practices:* In Pakistan, NDMA's Disaster Alert App and collaboration with MILKAR.com offer a scalable model for digital community engagement through multilingual alerts and volunteer-driven feedback. In the MENA region, IFRC and WHO used mobile platforms and WhatsApp hotlines during COVID-19 for real-time rumour tracking and perception monitoring in low-connectivity settings.

- **Recommendation:** Government and partners should leverage digital tools such as SMS, WhatsApp, and mobile apps (e.g., Kobo Toolbox) to enhance community engagement, feedback,

and accountability in emergencies. Tools must be co-designed with communities, available in local languages, and integrated with national early warning systems for timely, transparent response.

- **Measurable Indicators Improve Program Effectiveness**

  - **Lessons Learned:** Effective monitoring mechanisms ensure that community engagement strategies are responsive and adaptable.

  - *Best Practices:* During the Ebola outbreak, tracking feedback data helped refine response efforts, demonstrating that structured evaluation enhances engagement effectiveness.

  - **Recommendation:** Develop Standardized Monitoring Frameworks. Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for community engagement in disaster response, aligning with global best practices such as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).

ANNEXES

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Inclusion

"Inclusion means more than access, it means amplifying the voices that are often unheard and making their priorities central to every stage of action."

— *Community Engagement Guidelines for Humanitarian Action, NDMA & UNICEF, 2025*

12. Annexes

Annex 1: Role and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

1. Local Communities

Local communities are the backbone of disaster management efforts and play a crucial role in all phases. Their active participation ensures that disaster strategies are context-specific, inclusive, and effective. The following are examples of their key responsibilities during the pre-emergency, during emergency, and post-emergency phases:

Pre-Emergency Phase:
- Provide local knowledge for risk assessment and hazard mapping. During the 2010 floods, communities in Sindh identified vulnerable embankments and coordinated with local NGOs to reinforce them.
- Lead awareness campaigns using local influencers. Community leaders in Gilgit-Baltistan led public sessions on landslide risks before the 2016 GLOF events.
- Collaborate with authorities and NGOs to develop localized disaster management plans. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, local committees worked with the District Disaster Management Authority to draft community-based preparedness plans before the monsoon season.

During Emergency Phase:
- Disseminate early warnings via loudspeakers, social media, and word-of-mouth. In the 2022 floods, community elders used mosque loudspeakers and mobile alerts to warn others in Dera Ghazi Khan.
- Mobilize volunteers for rescue, relief distribution, and shelter setup. Villagers in Charsadda formed rescue teams during the 2010 floods to help evacuate people and livestock.

Post- Emergency Phase:
- Participate in damage and needs assessments. Following the 2005 earthquake, community members provided accurate damage assessments in Muzaffarabad to support relief planning.
- Lead recovery planning with sustainable solutions like raised homes. After the 2010 floods, communities in Southern Punjab constructed elevated homes to prevent future flood damage.
- Provide psychosocial support through local initiatives. In post-earthquake Balakot (2005), women's groups facilitated community healing through storytelling and peer counselling.

2. Civil Society Organizations

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs are vital partners in disaster management due to their grassroots presence, technical expertise, and ability to mobilize resources.

Pre-Emergency Phase:
- Raise awareness and advocate for inclusive disaster planning. HANDS Pakistan conducted flood preparedness workshops for vulnerable households in Thatta before the 2022 monsoon.
- Conduct community campaigns on preparedness and adaptation. The Aga Khan Development Network held DRR sessions on GLOF risks in Hunza before the 2017 events.
- Train volunteers on first aid and early warning systems. Sarhad Rural Support Programme trained youth in KP on first response mechanisms before peak monsoon season.

During Emergency Phase:
- Act as first responders delivering essential humanitarian aid. Edhi Foundation provided emergency shelter and food supplies in Sindh during the 2022 floods.
- Set up relief camps and operate in remote areas. Pakistan Red Crescent Society established mobile medical units during the 2005 earthquake response.
- Mobilize youth-led volunteer groups for field support. Alkhidmat Foundation mobilized university students in flood-affected districts of Balochistan for aid delivery.

Post-Emergency Phase:
- Implement long-term recovery programs including rebuilding and livelihood restoration. Mercy Corps distributed agricultural input kits in Dadu post-2022 floods.
- Monitor transparency and fairness in aid distribution. Transparency International Pakistan reviewed relief fund disbursement following the 2010 floods.
- Provide platforms for community feedback and advocacy. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan collected community feedback on recovery effectiveness post-earthquake 2005.

3. Academia and Research Institutions
These institutions support all phases of disaster management through evidence-based research, education, and policy recommendations.

Pre-Emergency Phase:
- Conduct risk assessments and mapping in high-risk areas. PMD and University of Peshawar jointly developed flood risk maps for the KP region.
- Integrate DRR into educational curricula. COMSATS introduced a disaster resilience course in its environmental sciences department.
- Collaborate on early warning system improvements. NUST worked with NDMA to pilot automated river-level monitoring stations in Punjab.

During Emergency Phase:
- Collect and analyze real-time data on impact and resource needs. LUMS deployed research teams to gather flood impact data in Southern Punjab during the 2022 emergency.

Post- Emergency Phase:
- Evaluate recovery efforts and assess aid effectiveness. Aga Khan University conducted health service impact assessments post-2010 floods.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations for future preparedness. Studies from Punjab University after the 2010 floods influenced improvements in provincial flood response plans.

4. Media
The media serves as a critical tool for communication, awareness, and advocacy throughout all disaster phases.

Pre- Emergency Phase:
- Raise public awareness and preparedness. Private TV channels aired a national preparedness campaign during the 2011 monsoon season.
- Counter misinformation and promote accurate reporting. During COVID-19, Pakistan Television (PTV) ran fact-checking segments to address vaccine myths.

During Emergency Phase:
- Share real-time updates, safety instructions, and resource information. Private News channels provided hourly updates on evacuation routes and flood alerts in 2022.
- Use social media to extend reach in remote areas. Journalists in Balochistan used Twitter to relay local emergency needs to humanitarian actors.

Post- Emergency Phase:
- Highlight recovery efforts and success stories. A national newspaper featured community rebuilding efforts in Charsadda post-2022 floods.
- Mobilize support and encourage community resilience. A newspaper published human interest stories encouraging donations and volunteerism after the 2005 earthquake.

Annex 2. Desk Review of Global Best Practices

Best practices	Description	Key initiative	References
International best practices			
Women's Village Councils, India	Mahila Gram Sabhas empower women in governance, addressing education, health, and safety.	Increased gender-inclusive decision-making and improved services for women.	India's Local Governance Act Maliha Sabash and Bala Sabash Best practices
Gender-Inclusive Disaster Preparedness, Philippines	Women actively participate in disaster planning, ensuring safe spaces, reproductive health services, and GBV prevention.	Enhanced disaster response, reduced women and children's vulnerability	Philippines DRR Framework Gender-Inclusive Disaster Risk Management:
Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action, Cameroon	Ensured persons with disabilities were included in crisis response through tailored services and accessible information.	Improved access to aid and participation in decision-making.	UNHCR, Inclusion in Humanitarian Response https://participation.cbm.org/supporting-material/case-studies
Children's Advisory Committees, Bangladesh	UNICEF-led initiative involving children in program planning for their communities.	Increased child participation in decision-making, leading to more relevant programs.	UNICEF Bangladesh Children's Advisory Committees in Dhaka:
Ebola Response, Sierra Leone	Traditional leaders educated communities on health measures, integrating cultural practices.	Increased trust in health interventions, reduced misinformation.	WHO Ebola Response Lessons from the response to Ebola Virus disease outbreak in Sierra Leone
Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), Bangladesh	Communities took ownership of sanitation solutions to eliminate open defecation.	Improved hygiene, reduced sanitation-related diseases	CLTS Bangladesh Program Community led total sanitation
Kudumbashree Women's Network, India	Women-led cooperatives for economic self-sufficiency and leadership.	Empowered women, improved financial independence and community well-being.	Kerala Poverty Eradication Initiative womens-social-capital-and-social-cohesion-in-kerala-the-case-of-kudumbashree.pdf
Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), Ethiopia	Food security program integrating community-driven solutions.	Reduced food insecurity, increased resilience to shocks.	Ethiopia PSNP Strategy Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) Integrating Disaster And Climate Risk Management
Local Leadership in Disaster Recovery, Haiti	Community leaders guided reconstruction efforts post-earthquake.	Strengthened local ownership, improved accountability.	Haiti Disaster Recovery Plan Local Leadership in Disaster Recovery:
Cultural Adaptation in Maternal Health, Ethiopia	Integrated traditional practices into modern maternal healthcare services.	Increased uptake of maternal health services, reduced complications.	Ethiopia Ministry of Health https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7553138/
Tribal Health & Nutrition Program, India	Used traditional storytelling to promote health awareness.	Increased trust in healthcare, improved nutrition and hygiene practices.	India Tribal Health Initiative Tribal Health Report, India.
Vodou-Informed Cholera Response, Haiti	Engaged Vodou leaders to align health messaging with local beliefs.	Reduced resistance to medical treatment, improved public health outcomes.	WHO Haiti Cholera Response

Cyclone Preparedness Program, Bangladesh	Used volunteers and early warning systems to improve disaster readiness.	Reduced cyclone fatalities and injuries, enhanced resilience.	Bangladesh CPP Strategy
Participatory Governance, Kerala, India	Community members influenced local budget and development priorities.	Improved public services, enhanced democratic participation.	Kerala Local Development Model The "New" Kerala Model: Lessons for Sustainable Development:
Community Health Volunteers, Kenya	Trained local volunteers to provide healthcare services and education.	Improved maternal and child health, increased access to healthcare.	Kenya CHV Program Community Health Strategy, Kenya:
Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction Committees, Philippines	Local governance-led disaster preparedness, including evacuation plans and early warnings.	Enhanced disaster response, reduced loss of life and property.	Philippines DRR Framework National-Disaster-Preparedness-Plan-2015-2018-Vol-1:
Local Leadership in Disaster Recovery, Haiti	Community leaders prioritized needs and guided post-earthquake reconstruction.	Strengthened local ownership, improved accountability.	Haiti Disaster Recovery Plan
Community Action Groups for HIV/AIDS, South Africa	Mobilized local groups for awareness, testing, and peer support.	Reduced stigma, increased access to HIV services.	South Africa HIV/AIDS Community Programs Miles to go, the response to HIV in eastern and Southern Africa:
Mothers' Groups for Health, Nepal	Women-led groups promoted maternal and child health services in rural areas.	Increased prenatal care, immunization rates, and reduced maternal/infant mortality.	Nepal Ministry of Health Facilitators and barriers to participation in health mothers' groups in improving maternal and child health and nutrition in Nepal : A mixed-methods study:
BRAC Education Program, Bangladesh	Community-based non-formal schools for marginalized children.	Increased literacy, improved education access for girls.	BRAC Bangladesh [1] BRAC Annual report 2020:
School Feeding Program, Bangladesh	Integrated food security with education to improve child nutrition.	Increased school attendance, reduced malnutrition.	WFP, Bangladesh School Feeding Initiative Baseline Study of WFP School-Feeding Programme:
Integrated Community Case Management (iCCM), Kenya	Community health workers provided primary healthcare for common illnesses.	Reduced child mortality, improved access to essential health services.	Kenya Health Ministry Kenya Integrated Community Case Management Implementation Framework and Plan of Action 2022 – 2027
National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), India	Strengthened rural healthcare through community-based workers and infrastructure.	Reduced infant and maternal mortality, expanded access to primary healthcare.	India NRHM Program
Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP), Bangladesh	Volunteer-based early warning and disaster preparedness program.	Reduced cyclone fatalities, improved community resilience.	Bangladesh CPP Strategy Cyclone Mora, Bangladesh:
Community-Based Ebola Communication, Liberia	Religious and community leaders engaged in Ebola awareness and prevention.	Increased trust in public health measures, reduced misinformation.	WHO Ebola Response[1] Community-Centered Responses to Ebola in Urban Liberia: The View from Below

Polio Eradication Initiative, India	Community health workers engaged parents through culturally sensitive vaccination campaigns.	Achieved polio-free status in 2014, widespread vaccination coverage.	India Polio Eradication Initiative Polio eradication in India, the lessons learned:
Post-Typhoon Haiyan Recovery Communication, Philippines	Used community radio and SMS for real-time recovery updates.	Improved transparency, minimized misinformation, strengthened accountability	Philippines Disaster Recovery Plan The Typhon Haiyan Response:
Integrating AAP into Humanitarian Operations	Embedding AAP principles in all humanitarian activities for inclusive, participatory response.	IFRC's Ebola response: Two-way community feedback systems to counter misinformation. Disaster response in Africa & Asia: Suggestion boxes, focus groups, and mobile tech for inclusive recovery.	IFRC, *Framework for Community Engagement and Accountability*
Accountability in Refugee Support	Ensuring displaced populations participate in planning and service delivery.	UNHCR's Cox's Bazar AAP: Culturally adapted help desks & feedback committees. Global complaint and feedback mechanisms to improve refugee trust & transparency.	UNHCR, *AAP in Refugee Response*
UNICEF's AAP Framework	Engaging children & caregivers in decision-making through participatory feedback.	Child-friendly complaint systems: Suggestion boxes, helplines, and safe reporting platforms. Digital tools (mobile apps, SMS) for real-time grievance management.	UNICEF, *Community Feedback in Education & Health Programs*
Child-Friendly Feedback Systems	Ensuring safe and accessible feedback mechanisms for children	Save the Children's inclusive consultations and child participation programs	Save the Children, Child Participation in Humanitarian Action
Gender-Sensitive AAP Strategies	Prioritizing women and girls' engagement in decision-making and response.	UNFPA's gender-focused CFMs & reproductive health services based on real-time feedback.	UNFPA, AAP & Gender-Based Programming
CFM for Migrants & Refugees	Establishing confidential and accessible complaint mechanisms.	Syrian refugee response: Hotline-based complaint system leading to improved hygiene and health services	IOM, Community Feedback Mechanisms in Humanitarian Action
Culturally Adapted Early Warning Systems	Integration of indigenous cyclone prediction knowledge (e.g., animal behavior, wind patterns) with formal early warning systems to improve community trust and evacuation compliance.	1. Collaboration with elders and local chiefs to design evacuation plans. 2. Use of community-owned radio for culturally appropriate messaging in native languages.	World Bank. (2016). *Indigenous Knowledge in Disaster Risk Reduction: The Vanuatu Experience*

National Best Practices			
Polio Eradication Initiative, Pakistan	Engaged religious leaders and community networks to counter vaccine hesitancy.	Increased vaccination rates, improved trust in health services.	WHO, Pakistan Polio Eradication Program[1] https://polioeradication.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GPEI-2020-Annual-Report-ISBN-9789240030763.pdf
Orangi Pilot Project (OPP)	Community-led low-cost sanitation initiative in Karachi, enabling residents to construct and manage their own infrastructure.	Improved sanitation, empowered communities, and inspired replication in other urban areas.	Orangi Pilot Project Research & Training Institute (OPP-RTI) Case study of Orangi Pilot Project:
Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)	Localized response teams trained to manage disasters and provide first aid and assistance to affected communities.	CERTs empower communities by training volunteers in disaster management and response.	National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Pakistan
The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Community Programs	Involves communities in disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and response activities, with a focus on marginalized groups.	Establishment of community-based health programs and disaster response units.	Pakistan Red Crescent Society
Flood Emergency Response & Rehabilitation (FERR) Program	Involves community participation in flood management and recovery efforts, focusing on local involvement in decision-making.	Provides early warning systems and integrates local knowledge into flood risk management.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Community Engagement	Promotes community participation in disaster management, focusing on vulnerability assessments and capacity building.	Initiatives like participatory risk assessment workshops and community-led planning.	*Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)*
Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Community Engagement	AKDN implements community-based disaster risk reduction programs, focusing on vulnerable areas, particularly in rural and mountain regions.	Provides disaster preparedness training, risk assessments, and recovery strategies for affected populations.	Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Community Engagement
The Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) Disaster Risk Reduction	The network of rural support programs in Pakistan engages communities to improve disaster risk reduction through collective action.	Provides training in disaster preparedness, building community-based disaster management frameworks.	Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN)

Annex 3. Pathway to Institutionalizing Community Engagement for Humanitarian Context in Pakistan

Community Engagement for DRR

Change
A people-centered disaster risk management system that empowers communities —especially the most vulnerable—to take active roles in preparedness, response, and recovery, fostering trust, accountability, and lasting resilience at every level.

Systemic changes
- Institutionalization of community engagement as a core component of DRR policies and frameworks (e.g., integration into NDMA/PDMA/DDMA plans).
- Strengthened coordination between government agencies, civil society, and communities (e.g., AAP/CE working groups).
- Robust feedback mechanisms (e.g., hotlines, community scorecards) are institutionalized to ensure two-way communication and accountability.

Intermediate changes
- Community Engagement integration into all PDMA/DDMA plans
- Enforce collaborative disaster platforms with shared decision-making power and community feedback systems.
- Enhanced two-way communication systems (e.g., mobile platforms, community radios) for early warnings and feedback.

Key interventions
- **Create a national CE framework** ensuring marginalized groups' participation in all disaster management phases.
- **Train PDMA/DDMA staff** on CE tools (e.g., PRA, FGDs, feedback systems).
- **Establish Inclusive CE Committees** at all levels with equal representation of marginalized groups for participation in disaster planning.
- **Establish forums** uniting government, NGOs, and communities to streamline response, prevent duplication, and optimize resources.
- **Create Gender-Sensitive Awareness Campaigns** to challenge gender norms and promote women's participation
- **Community Engagement Training** for staff and leaders on engagement strategies and inclusion.
- **Train Religious & Community Leaders** to counter misinformation and enhance community buy-in.
- **Establish feedback systems** to gather feedback in order to improve interventions in disasters

Bottlenecks
- Marginalized groups excluded from decision-making.
- Distrust in authorities weakens engagement
- Limited capacity in participatory methods
- Capacity gaps hinder effective engagement
- Coordination gaps drive duplication and inefficiency
- Gender and cultural norms limit inclusive engagement
- Distrust disrupts community,& partners collaboration
- Strong gender norm resistance hinders awareness efforts
- Rural areas lack infrastructure for inclusive participation.
- Low community awareness on the available CFM
- Inadequate feedback mechanisms
- Poor digital access, especially in rural or marginalized areas.

Deprivation
- Structural barriers prevent women, PWDs, and rural communities from decision-making, resulting in plans that ignore their needs (e.g., inaccessible shelters,)
- Unenforced policies and fragmented coordination create top-down, inefficient responses that erode community trust in institutions.
- Marginalized groups don't have the tools, resources, or specific warnings they need to prepare for disasters, which keeps them dependent during emergencies.

Risks
Limited support from government agencies can stall implementation and integration of CE frameworks.

Political instability or lack of prioritization for community engagement initiatives.

Insufficient inter-agency coordination, leading to fragmented implementation.

Opportunities
Government commitment to DRR and resilience-building aligns with global frameworks (e.g., Sendai Framework).

Growing recognition of community-based approaches in risk management.

Potential for partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies to support implementation