

BRC EVALUATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE:
External Evaluation of DEC-funded COVID19 interventions in Bangladesh

Background information:

- **Date and duration of evaluation:** May 2022 to July 2022
- **Evaluator/s:** Proaction Consulting: Krajai Chowdhury and David Stone.
- **Evaluation Management Response Team members:**
 Kaustubh Kukde, BRC Programme Manager (V2R) and Evaluation Manager; Magda Rios-Mendez, BRC Grants Management Delegate; Resty Lou Talamayan IFRC Operations Manager Population Movement Operation (PMO); Luke Tredget, BRC Head of Emergencies, Surge and Technical Advisory; Md. Iftekhar Alam Rumi, Swedish Red Cross (SweRC) Programme Manager.

Recommendations

1. Measures are needed to prepare for future potential health and medical emergencies. (Page 38)

Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>The RCRC movement has been known for its response capacities and in Bangladesh, Red Crescent Society which is our implementing partner has invested over decades to build and upgrade its and communities' response capacities through preparedness programs. The investment in the upgradation of the response capacities is a continuous process. The learnings from the COVID-19 response will inform the future capacity-building interventions of the BDRCS. It is important to mention that IFRC is part of the Global Taskforce on cholera control and has deployed a delegate to coordinate with stakeholders such as government agencies, INGOs, NGOs, UN agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) to establish a country support platform for cholera control. This platform in the future if considered by the authorities can be expanded to work on other health and medical emergencies.</p>	<p>Planned preparedness activities ongoing.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><i>BDRCS leadership</i></p>

2. Review and amend conditions for staff and volunteers supporting future specialist facilities such as the IITC. (Page 38)

Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>From the onset of the COVID Response, the duty of care for staff and volunteers was of utmost priority.</p> <p>When the IITC was established, the staff members working for this specialized facility were given a generous compensation package and benefits. This was above the package given to the staff of a regular health facility operated by BDRCS. Apart from the risk allowances, provision of food and accommodation, dedicated vehicles for transport, flexible working hours, and standard PPEs, a staff health doctor was also assigned to the IITC to ensure that the physical and mental well-being of staff was looked after. A business Continuity Plan and risk register were also in place.</p> <p>The well-being of staff and volunteers was considered throughout, however, we accept that the initial stages of the response were tense and there was a level of uncertainty which may have led to negative experiences. Future responses will consider feedback from this report.</p>	Share evaluation report and learning with key departments	By September 2022	PMO Operations Manager
3. Reasonable stockpiles of regularly distributed materials should be considered in camps. (Page 38)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>The Population Movement Operation has stockpiles for both regular program distribution and contingency stocks. The current contingency stocks can support 30,000 families with emergency shelter kits, essential household items and emergency WASH kits. These are standard kits set by the Sectors. These are stored in 3 warehouses near the camp area, and some were safely kept inside specific camps. On the other hand, Framework Agreements with various suppliers are also in place, especially for items where regular distributions are scheduled. Examples of these are hygiene kits which are distributed once a year and hygiene top-up kits which are distributed every 2 months. As these are scheduled distributions, having framework agreements is the best option to reduce warehousing costs. During the height of the COVID-19 response where deliveries were halted</p>	Continue stockpiling basic supplies required for the implementation of activities within the camps.	Ongoing	SweRC programme manager and BDRCS WASH manager

	<p>and staff and volunteer movement inside the camp was restricted, PMO changed its distribution approach ensuring that it followed COVID-19 prevention and control protocols such as physical distancing, wearing of masks, provision of handwashing stations and increasing number of days of distribution as the mass gathering is prohibited in distribution sites. Duty of care for staff and volunteers was the utmost consideration ensuring that they are trained and provided with PPE.</p> <p>Stockpiling essential supplies is standard practice for the WASH programme in the camps, the stocks are safely stored and appropriately managed in the project's warehouse located in camp 18. These stockpiles were key in allowing us to implement the programme during the strictest times of lockdowns. The project team and management will continue their efforts to ensure reasonable amounts of supplies are always stored within the camp.</p>			
4. BDRCS might consider additional training courses such as the Epidemic Control for Volunteers. (Page 38)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>The Population Movement Operation health volunteers are all trained on Epidemic Control as this is added as part of the CBHFA Core Modules in this operational context. It is a core topic in the Primary Prevention Module which also highlights MHPSS, Health in Emergencies, Immunization, and Communicable and Non-Communicable Disease Prevention, among others.</p> <p>The BDRCS has developed a proposal for cholera control called ONE WASH. The project will focus on the cholera hotspots in coordination with the local authorities.</p> <p>The proposal includes the training of the branch-level volunteers and the concerned stakeholders on cholera preparedness and control.</p>	<p>To enhance epidemic control capacity a project proposal for ONE WASH funds support was submitted, which if approved will increase the capacity of BDRCS to support epidemic control.</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p><i>BDRCS leadership</i></p>
5. Additional training and awareness raising is still required on some core WASH activities and services. (Page 39)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	This is an area of improvement which will be incorporated into the programme plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a training needs assessment to identify knowledge and skill gaps. - Conduct training and awareness raising based on needs identified. 	<i>October 2022 to December 2022</i>	<i>SweRC programme manager and BDRCS WASH manager</i>
6. Urgent attention is needed for some WASH Infrastructure. (Page 39)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	Some WASH facilities/structures constructed by other organisations during the early stages of the emergency need repair. These facilities are now under the management of the WASH programme in camp 18 and are being considered for upgrades as a priority. The process of upgrading them is ongoing and is part of the implementation plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An assessment of WASH infrastructures to be made to identify those that are in need of urgent repair - Repair damaged infrastructure as per the prioritisation plan developed 	<i>September to December 2022</i>	<i>SweRC programme manager and BDRCS WASH manager</i>
Comments: BDRCS is the WASH focal point in camp 18 and therefore has been given responsibility for some WASH infrastructure constructed by other organisations				
7. WASH findings from this evaluation should be shared with other camp-based actors. (page 39)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted		The evaluation will be published in ALNAP and will be shared with the	<i>By the end of September</i>	<i>BRC Country Manager and IFRC</i>

<input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected		WASH sector in Cox's Bazar. The evaluation will also be shared with Movement Partners.		<i>Head of Sub Delegation</i>
8. Maintaining the enthusiasm and willingness of community volunteers is essential. (page 39)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	PMO will continue to advocate along with the entire humanitarian community to ensure the right incentives and allowances are provided to volunteers. The training calendar for volunteers is finalised to ensure that the operation will continue to build the capacity of volunteers mobilised.	Continue with planned activities in support of volunteers.	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>IFRC Head of Sub delegation and BDRCS head of PMO</i>
Comments: The past 2 years were challenging as there were restrictions on training and gathering due to COVID-19.				
9. Explore options (and conditions) to spread the benefits of certain livelihood activities supported by conditional grants. (Page 39)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected		The recommended action by the evaluator will be discussed with the field team members and the community disaster management committees during the planning exercise for the next year.	<i>Q4 2022</i>	<i>BRC Programme Coordinator and Country Manager</i>
Comments: A detailed beneficiary identification process was used which included household data collection to understand the social and financial status of the families. The selection criteria agreed with the communities were used to shortlist the beneficiaries. The selected beneficiary lists were displayed in the communities and the feedback of the community disaster management committee, and the people were sought. The questions, recommendations, feedback, and complaints received were addressed with openness. Thereafter, the beneficiaries' lists were finalised. This ensured that there is no or minimal tensions within the communities regarding the selection of the beneficiaries.				

10. Facilitating links with banking services was an important step in promoting confidence and future independence for personal/business savings. (Page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>Directly linking beneficiaries with banking institutions was a strategic, and potentially beneficial choice, enabling and encouraging beneficiaries on conditional cash grants to start their independent banking and saving activities. While the conditions of the arrangement with Sonali Bank seem to have been well negotiated, programme staff should be vigilant to ensure that such arrangements do not encourage or enable banks to pursue their own commercial interests such as encouraging beneficiaries to open extra bank accounts, which could jeopardise the success of the person’s own achievements in addition to broader humanitarian and development interventions.</p>	Ongoing.	<i>Will continue till end of the project i.e., Dec 2024</i>	<i>BRC Programme Coordinator</i>
11. Some existing Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) structures require additional support. (Page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>The V2R Cox’s Bazar project has been extended till the end of 2024 based on the recommendations of the mid-term review. One of the recommendations of the mid-term review is to link CDMCs with the ward, union and district disaster management committees. This activity has been included in the three-year plan of the V2R Cox’s Bazar project.</p>	<p>The recommendation is aligned with the next two-year plan. CDMCs will be linked to Ward and Union disaster management committees.</p>	<i>Jan 2023- Dec 2024</i>	<i>BRC Programme Coordinator and BRC Country Manager</i>
12. More evidence needs to be gathered around the improvements to and potential sustainability of activities specifically funded by conditional grants. (page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	In the second half of 2022, the V2R Cox's Bazar project has planned to document the evidence-based learnings of the interventions implemented so far. The documentation will be done in the form of case studies, best practices and through in-house research.	The case studies development and research work will be carried out to document evidence-based learnings of the interventions.	<i>By Dec 2022</i>	<i>BRC Programme Coordinator and Country Manager</i>
13. Social topics need to be addressed within the context of the V2R programme. (Page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	This is incorporated as part of the programme.	Ongoing.	<i>Will continue till end of the project i.e., Dec 2024</i>	<i>Programme Coordinator and Country Manager</i>
14. BRC Management should review its approach for handling multi-country DEC appeals. (page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>It has already been accepted within BRC that we should take a different approach to manage operations that cover multiple regions, and this has already been reviewed and documented, however, it is not accepted that an overall review of our approach to multi-country DEC appeals is justified.</p> <p>The global nature of the COVID pandemic led to many challenges in managing pooled funds, in particular how to prioritise between different countries and programmes. BRC has a lot of experience in managing multi-country DEC appeals (in recent years the Cyclone Idai, East Africa Crisis and Syria Crisis appeals), and this rarely causes complications – the issue in this instance was that the countries eligible for DEC funding (which was chosen by DEC, not BRC) covered <u>multiple regions</u>, and therefore regional teams within BRC. This necessitated a complex oversight and decision-making</p>	No further action required.	N/A	N/A

	mechanism with regard to the allocation of funds, which was made even more challenging given the volatile nature of the pandemic, with different countries experiencing very high caseloads and needs at different times.			
15. Continue to share lessons and experiences with other Movement actors. (Page 40)				
Management Response	Decision Rationale	Action/s to be taken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	<p>Lessons learnt are disseminated through annual Lessons Learnt workshops attended by all Movement Partners.</p> <p>Sectoral monthly meetings are also scheduled and chaired by BDRCS, which provide an opportunity for lessons and experience sharing.</p>	Ongoing.	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>BRC Country Manager</i> <i>IFRC Head of Sub office</i> <i>SweRC programme manager</i> <i>BDRCS head of PMO</i>