S&I findings – April 2021

Introduction

Purpose of the review: To document the process of incorporating the Safe and Inclusive Minimum Actions in a Programme for the first time, to identify what has worked well and what changes should be made going forward

Format and outputs:

- Baseline review - no recommendations to be made at this time
- Secondary review in 6 months time – report and recommendations

Who we interviewed:

- Nigeria RC DM programme manager
- Nigeria RC S&I focal point
- BRC Country Manager, Nigeria
- BRC Programme Officer, Nigeria
- S&I Advisors
- Director of P&A
- Head of Region, WCA and OSBs

What we heard

The minimum actions

- Minimum actions were felt to not always be realistic and require tailoring to fit NS and their capacity – therefore the design needs to be practical and not too ambitious
- Advisors sometimes feel like they want to go above the minimum actions within project design, because the actions are so basic – have to 'reign in' their input to ensure design is appropriate
- Minimum actions are based on IFRC CEA and PSEA guidance so are aligned with the Movement approach - it should, therefore, be easier to advocate for their use with other PNS
- Need to keep minimum actions, training and communication simple to ensure it can be used by staff and volunteers and easily passed onto colleagues (both within BRC and partners)
- Clash between what can be achieved through programmatic delivery and what needs to happen at an organisational level. Potential for the latter to be integrated into our NSD approach instead of/as well as IQM? For example, PSEA requires change across the whole organisation e.g. external referral pathways
- Some actions are 'quick wins' but others require significant more investment / time – can these always be achieved within a project timeframe? E.g. complaints mechanisms vs referral pathways

What we heard

Process

- Positive that S&I has been integrated into IQM and has been given ‘weight’ as it is specifically included in ‘Approval of design’ sign off
- Approach is more sustainable as it is now integrated into our core processes
- However, it is not clear for approvers *what* they should be looking for when signing off projects e.g. how do they ensure S&I isn’t tokenistic and has been fully integrated into the design?
    - Suggestions for an S&I checklist approvers can refer to when signing off
    - Collaborative Review should be documented and provided as evidence as part of sign off
- Need for clarity when working in consortia – how can we influence integration of our S&I minimum actions in more diverse project models. What is a realistic ask of our partners? What will we tolerate?
- Clarity as to what happens if we don’t successfully meet the minimum requirements? E.g. Do we withdraw funding?
- Difficulty in getting budget for S&I activities – advisors are either engaged too late in design / inception *or* there is a reluctance to ‘give up’ budget for non-programmatic activities
- Ensuring participation through project design and implementation is challenging - both for NS and communities

What we heard

People

- It is crucial for advisors to be integrated right from the start of the design process and to be familiar with the context to ensure input is practical and sensitive to cultural norms
- The focal point approach is working well at the moment, but as workloads increase this will become unsustainable
- The current model is reliant on individuals and their relationships with teams – how can S&I be better mainstreamed so the workload and responsibility is shared? Are we under resourced or do we need to change *how* we are working?
- Key to have resource ‘on the ground’ to support with partner coordination – face to face interactions are the most effective way to keep things moving. Also key to ensure messaging is tailored and activities are sensitive to the context – for example, having focal points in Nigeria helped to contextualise proposed posters
- However, we need to consider the demands on the resource – both in terms of time and expectations as to what can be achieved
- Need for more IMT sponsorship and promotion of S&I so it is not just process / system drive. For example, we are reporting upwards on a monthly basis, but this isn’t being communicated to the wider Directorate

What we heard

Working with partners

- Crucial to have engagement with partners at a senior level to get buy-in for those activities outside of project influence (e.g. introducing policies). Outside of the project scope – are we able to influence for wider organisational change?
- Partners can be quite hierarchical, and this needs to be factored in by BRC when communicating with the partner about S&I and planning activities (e.g. allowing for delays associated with navigating this hierarchy). Having a focal point in the NS helps navigate this hierarchy
- Key to ‘win over’ NS programme teams to ensure success of S&I activities – and may expand our influence into other non-BRC funded projects. Requires advisors to be quite operational to ensure things happen, which is time consuming
- Use of counterpart role within NS is helpful, though they may not always have enough time to dedicate to the project
- How to translate S&I knowledge (from project activities, trainings etc.) into institutional knowledge within the NS and enable knowledge sharing – again to propagate S&I across other services
- Need for clarity around how we influence partners to engage with S&I minimum actions when working in consortia

Food for thought

- Institutional vs programmatic actions (e.g. PSEA vs S&I) – what falls within the project scope?
- How sustainable are the minimum actions in BRC supported projects? What happens when a project closes? Do we care? What do we do if we're only working in a limited number of branches – is that good enough?
- Who's responsibility is it to ensure the minimum actions are implemented? The country manager or the advisor or others?
- Are we under-resourced or do we need to change how we work? E.g. current model of focal points for countries and advisors working operationally in those contexts
- Are we aspiring to the minimum actions or beyond? Are we resourced for this and are we being realistic?
- When working with partners, consortia etc. how far are we willing to go with the minimum actions? Will we pull funding if they aren't met or embedded in projects?
- If we want NS to embrace the minimum actions, shouldn't we start with our own NS? *(this was not raised during interviews but we do think that we should start with getting our own house in order!)*
- Do we need a roadmap for embedding S&I across our programmes?
- There could be an unconscious bias towards the advisors area of expertise – does this matter?
- In some instances, could it be better to have a focused project on one aspect e.g. PSEA? For example, in Nigeria one of the interviewees talked about 'minimum actions for PSEA'. Would it be better to concentrate solely on PSEA across the NS?