IMPACT

Raising Program Quality

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Introduction

IMPACT is the Crisis Response, Recovery and Development Department's Program Quality Framework. The acronym of the word 'IMPACT' defines program quality through six Principles: **Informed, Measure, Partner, Adapt, Client-centered** and **Transformative**. IMPACT is designed to help us achieve both the 'Impact' and 'Scale' goals of [Strategy100 (S100)](). IMPACT replaces the Good & Great Standards and builds on the significant progress made across the strategic objectives of IRC2020. All of the concepts from the Good & Great Standards have been incorporated into the IMPACT Framework.

The IMPACT Framework also complements The IRC Way: our Code of Conduct which is founded upon four core values of *Integrity, Accountability, Service* and *Equality*. IMPACT is rooted in these values and the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. IMPACT also furthers our adherence to important organizational policies that are referenced in The IRC Way including our Safeguarding and Gender Equality policies. In addition to our organizational policies, the IMPACT Standards aim to ensure our compliance with the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS), which ensures that communities and people affected by crisis are at the center of humanitarian action and is used by an increasing number of donors to ensure program quality. For more information on how the IMPACT Standards align with CHS, please click [here]().

The IMPACT Framework applies to all CRRD Country Programs to help us advance high-quality programming across all sectors. All Country Programs are expected to work to meet the IMPACT Standards over time. All Country Program staff should use IMPACT to guide their decisions about program design and delivery. Country Programs can expect to receive support and technical assistance from colleagues in Regional Teams, Technical Excellence, Emergencies & Humanitarian Action Unit, Measurement Unit, Research & Innovation and the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team to apply and contextualize IMPACT.

IMPACT places our clients at the center of our work for greater accountability to them along with our partners and each other as colleagues. From delivery at the frontline to planning in headquarters, IMPACT is relevant to everyone engaged in the program lifecycle. Even though the achievement of the standards depends on a range of factors - many of which may be beyond our control - we commit ourselves to consistently attempting to achieve them.

IMPACT
Key Messages

Each IMPACT Principle has a Key Message to help us remember and apply program quality in our daily routines. As we consider IMPACT in our everyday conversations with each other, clients and partners, we will strengthen our ability to deliver high-quality programming:

PRINCIPLE	KEY MESSAGE
Informed	We use evidence and learning to inform outcome-driven programming
Measure	We measure and use data to drive decisions
Partner	We partner as equals for sustained quality and scale
Adapt	We adapt to changes in context and needs
Client-centered	We engage clients to shape programs
Transformative	We deliver inclusive programs and transform gender and other systemic inequalities

IMPACT
Standards

IMPACT Standards

At the heart of IMPACT are a total of 18 Standards spread across three phases of programming: **Prepare**, **Design** and **Implement**. Applied comprehensively, the IMPACT Standards will help us practically achieve the 'Impact' and 'Scale' goals of Strategy100 to ensure we deliver the highest quality programming at scale. Here are a few of the direct connections between IMPACT and S100:

I   **Informed Standards** support our ambitions to *better use research and evidence*. These Standards call for the use of evidence - along with client needs and our understanding of context - to inform our programs as per the Outcomes and Evidence Framework (OEF).

M   **Measure Standards** support our ambitions to *power our decisions with data to drive greater impact*. These Standards are aligned with IRC's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Handbook and will strengthen our ability to measure client outcomes and understand client feedback.

P   **Partner Standards** support our ambitions to *build a network of civil society partners*. These Standards are aligned with the Partnership Excellence for Equality and Results System (PEERS) and will help us improve the quality of our partnerships.

A   **Adapt Standards** support our ambitions to *enable more agile and impactful program design*. These Standards remind us to continuously learn from changes in context and build flexibility into our proposals to better respond to clients' multiple needs.

C   **Client-centered Standards** support our ambitions to *give our clients greater influence over program design and delivery*. These Standards call for meaningful client engagement throughout the program lifecycle so that clients can shape and improve the services we deliver.

T   **Transformative Standards** support our ambitions to *tackle gender inequalities and inequalities of power*. These Standards ensure that at minimum our programs are inclusive and consider targeted action that can be taken to address gender and other systemic inequalities.

The IMPACT Standards comprehensively support the S100 Impact goal to 'Raise Program Quality'. Aspects of the S100 Scale goal to 'Reach more people' are primarily under the Partner Standards but components of how to scale high-quality programming can be found throughout the IMPACT Standards.

Continuous Improvement

The IMPACT Framework includes an optional Self-Assessment for continuous improvement that can be conducted whenever and as frequently as country teams find helpful. The Self-Assessment provides an opportunity to reflect on and progress in advancing the 18 IMPACT Standards. The Self-Assessment can provide insights into where improvements are needed to advance program quality and identify priorities for the following year therefore it can be used to identify which commitments a Country Program may wish to choose in their SAP-IP.
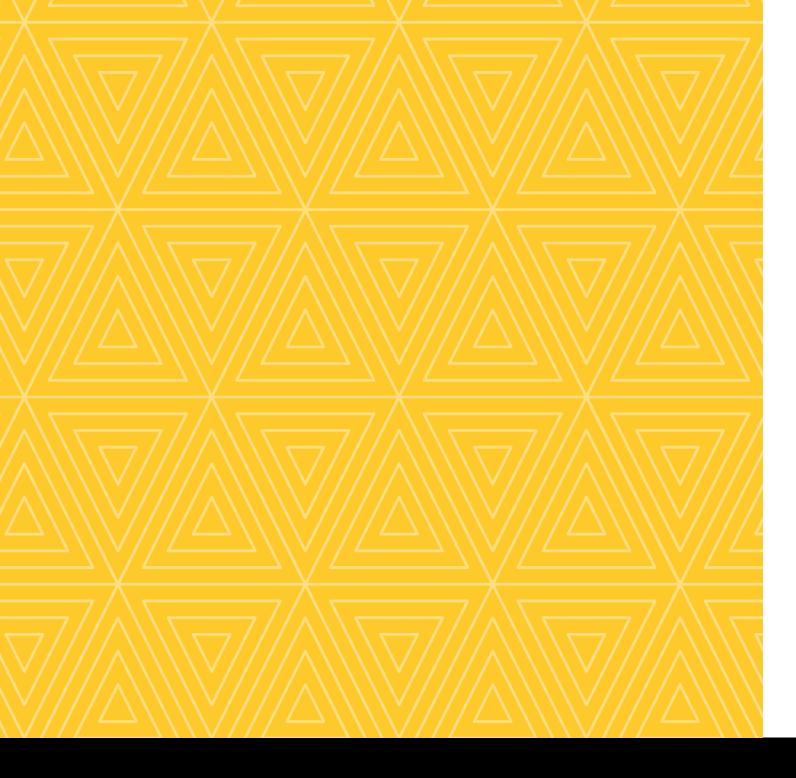
Country teams are encouraged to incorporate IMPACT into existing routines including as an agenda topic for reflection: in team meetings, check-ins with line managers and one-to-one discussions with colleagues who provide technical assistance, including regional support teams.

PHASE	PREPARE	DESIGN	IMPLEMENT
	Country program-level	*Project-level*	*Project-level*
WHEN DOES IT APPLY?	These Standards apply to Country Program-level processes that prepare us for program design and implementation i.e. Country SAP processes, program design and other processes such as emergency preparedness, procurement, HR and safeguarding.	These Standards apply to project-level design processes i.e. proposals and grants	These Standards apply to project-level implementation

	1 PREPARE	**2** DESIGN	**3** IMPLEMENT
INFORMED I	We prioritize programs that are informed by needs, context, research evidence and can be implemented at scale.	We design outcome-driven projects that are informed by contextualized ToCs and research evidence and are aligned with sector standards.	We generate learning and manage knowledge from project meetings, technical support and research evidence.
MEASURE M	We put in place standardized tools, procedures and routines to measure outcomes, scale, quality and client satisfaction.	We plan and budget for the measurement and analysis of IRC core and donor indicators.	We collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender, age, and where possible disability and other contextually relevant characteristics.
PARTNER P	We identify our role based on how we can best support, complement or reinforce local actors and systems.	We co-design projects with partners, identifying roles, responsibilities and resources for each partner.	We partner as equals, promoting mutual accountability, support and learning.
ADAPT A	We prepare for timely and appropriate adaptations to meet evolving needs.	We analyze project risks and build flexibility into proposals.	We adapt based on changes in context, client feedback, project and sector learning.
CLIENT-CENTERED C	We collaborate with clients to identify priority outcomes and intervention approaches.	We listen to clients, prioritize their choices and plan for their participation.	We promote client participation and respond to their feedback and complaints.
TRANSFORMATIVE T	We analyze inequalities, based on gender and other forms of exclusion, that affect our clients.	We identify targeted actions to support inclusion and address gender and other systemic inequalities.	We ensure that our services are safe, dignified and equally accessible to women, girls and identified marginalized groups.

The internal IMPACT Handbook includes recommended practices that provide practical, and specific guidance on what the IMPACT Standards mean when applied to our work. Recommended practices are not required but they provide additional details on aspects of all 18 Standards. The internal IMPACT Handbook also provides recommended resources - guidance, tools & templates and trainings - that can help us achieve each Standard. Country teams may accomplish the IMPACT Standards using other and modified actions.

If you work for the IRC, you can reach out to IMPACT@rescue.org *to receive the internal version of the IMPACT Handbook or you can find it on RescueNet.*

Glossary of Terms

A

Accessible

Describes any type of special design, assistive technology, product, or service that enables individuals, across a wide spectrum of abilities, to fully participate in society.

Accountability

The practice of being responsible for what we do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens. At the IRC, this refers to the organization's Client Responsive Programming Framework which implies that we collect, analyze and respond to client feedback and support client participation in project design and implementation.

Adaptations

Intentional changes made temporarily or permanently to program/project strategies, design and implementation plans such as theory of change, activities, indicators, delivery methods, target groups, partners, or locations.

Appropriate

The quality of (a project, program, or service) being suitable or proper in the circumstances, based on contextual data that includes capacity of local actors to deliver, culture/preferences of the targeted group, accessibility to all in need as per discrimination in context, not putting clients, their community and environment at risk of harm.

C

Client

A person for whom the IRC provides, or intends to provide, assistance or services. We use the term "client" instead of beneficiary, because it signals our belief that the people we serve have the right to decide what kind of aid and services they need and want.

Client feedback

Priority needs, preferences, request for information, request for assistance, complaints and compliments provided by clients and other members of the community.

Client feedback mechanism

Formalized process to collect, record, analyze and respond to client feedback.

Client preferences

Clients' preferences for the type of services that they would like to receive to address their priority needs.

Client priorities

Clients' perspectives on what their priority needs are and how they would like their lives to improve.

Client satisfaction

The degree to which the people we serve report that our programs meet or exceed their expectations. At the IRC, we typically measure client satisfaction through a standardized survey, which captures clients' assessment of our programs according to seven core feedback themes: relevance, quality, access, safety & fair treatment, respectful & dignified treatment, impact and voice & empowerment.

Complaints

A type of feedback that is negative and lodged with the intention of receiving a response/action.

Context analysis

Analysis of local issues and dynamics to inform IRC programming and design.

Core indicator

Indicators that have been chosen by IRC Technical Units to measure the IRC's progress toward achieving the main sub-outcomes and outcomes in the Outcomes and Evidence Framework.

Cost-effectiveness

A measure of the balance between a program's costs and the impacts that the program creates in the lives of our clients. Cost-effectiveness is usually measured as the cost per outcome, e.g. the cost per life saved or the cost per child who learns to read.

D Data

A series of observations, measurements, facts or pieces of information.

Disaggregation

The process of breaking down information into smaller sub-populations. For instance, breaking data down into grade level within school aged students, country of origin within racial/ethnic categories, or gender among student populations are all ways of disaggregating data. Typical disaggregation includes age, sex, disability.

Discrimination

The unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favor one group over others on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, religion, and other categories.

Diversity

Diversity encompasses the many ways in which people differ and are unique this includes different values, personalities, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, health, social and economic status, skills and other specific personal or group characteristics. Respecting diversity means recognizing and valuing those differences and creating a supportive, inclusive and non-discriminatory environment in which everyone's rights are upheld.

Donor indicator

An indicator that is frequently defined and requested by a donor. Any donor indicator that is included in a project design is required to be collected and reported on.

I Inclusion

Enabling people from diverse background and traditionally marginalized communities to fully participate in collective processes, including decision-making and power-sharing while bringing their whole selves into these processes based on equality with others. Culture is inclusive when the engagement, rules, and norms are carefully constructed and intentionally upheld to promote experiences of both belonging and uniqueness for its members.

Intervention

A package of activities implemented in a fairly standardized way, designed to contribute to one or more outcomes. The IST uses "intervention" as the unit of program design and implementation. These have been defined by each technical unit.

M

Marginalized Groups

Groups of people who face systemic disadvantages, exclusion, and barriers to opportunities, resources and power based on their race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, religion, immigration status and other contextually relevant categories.

Monitoring

The process of regularly and systematically collecting and analyzing information about a project and, when appropriate, using it to make adjustments to the project. Project monitoring data may be used to adjust project implementation, enable internal and external reporting, inform project design and advocacy, and promote accountability to beneficiaries.

O

Outcome

A specific change to achieve improvements in people's education, health, economic wellbeing, safety, or power. These are the short-term and medium-term effects of a program's outputs, changes that contribute to the program's overall goal or higher-level outcome.

P

Program modalities

The methods by which the IRC achieves impact for our clients e.g., through direct service delivery by the IRC (including cash and/or voucher assistance); through partnerships with local actors; or through IRC and our partners' influence to change policy and/or practice to enable more effective service delivery.

Project risks

Issues that may affect the achievement of outcomes for our clients (e.g., economic and cultural barriers to economic participation; natural environment and man-made risks; access constraints for staff and partners), or the wellbeing of our clients and partners (e.g., tension in the community and how our intervention may exacerbate tensions; IRC's clients' safety and how IRC programming may affect safety in the family, home, school, workplace or community).

Proposal

A document, typically created at the request of a donor, that will define an intervention, the anticipated outcomes, and the indicators that will be used for measuring those outcomes, among other information. A successful proposal will result the transfer of money to achieve the stated outcomes.

Q

Qualitative data

Information that can be easily standardized in numbers or categories; usually collected through service delivery data, representative surveys or standard observation checklists.

Quantitative data

Descriptive data on the perspective of individuals or groups, providing information on people's needs, values, and the problems they face. Qualitative methods aim at understanding the why and how of issues. Individual interviews and focus groups are the most common qualitative methodologies.

R

Relevant

The quality of (a project, program, or service) being aligned with identified needs of the intended clients. Being relevant does not mean being appropriate (refer to appropriate definition that speaks to context and clients feedback data). To contribute to sustainable outcomes programs should be relevant and appropriate.

Research evidence

Information that is systematically obtained and analyzed to better understand the nature of a problem and to determine whether, how, why and at what cost a given intervention addresses that problem. Research evidence is generated using rigorous and ethical methods that answer the most critical questions for action.

SScale

For IRC, scale mainly refers to the number of people we reach through our different services and activities. In Strategy 100, our scale ambitions means reaching more people, but also providing our clients with a more holistic set of services, and longer-term support.

Systemic inequalities

Inequalities that are rooted in the system-wide operation of a society that excludes members of groups from significant participation in major social institutions. Those inequalities are historically rooted in intersecting systems of discrimination in a specific context that advantage members of a dominant group while disadvantaging others based on race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, class, nationality, language, etc. Those systems of discrimination have historically (re)produced systemic inequalities and can both benefit and harm members of the same society.

TTheory of Change (ToC)

A Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It pictures the pathways to achieve each outcome. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term outcomes and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (sub-outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the outcome to occur. IRC has chosen to use ToCs as a practical tool for designing stronger programs.

Transformative action

An action and/or approach that fully recognizes systemic inequalities, their impacts, and social and cultural norms that produce and reproduce inequalities in a specific context. With that understanding, gender-transformative programming includes activities that work to change underlying social norms that create and reinforce inequalities, by transforming attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

Annex

Annex

IMPACT and Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality & Accountability (CHS)

The IMPACT Standards aim to ensure our compliance with the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS). The IRC is a signatory of CHS and an active member of the CHS Alliance. In combination with internal IRC policies - The IRC Way and Safeguarding - IMPACT significantly aligns with CHS and its nine commitments. For more information on how the IMPACT Standards align with CHS, please click on the icon.

MEAL & IMPACT Standards

The Measure Standards of IMPACT focus on Measurement and are directly related to the MEAL Handbook. Where the three Measure Standards provide high-level guidance, the MEAL Handbook articulates IRC's step-by-step approach to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to improve our programming and, ultimately, the lives of our clients. For more information, please click this icon.

IMPACT and Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality & Accountability (CHS)

What are the Core Humanitarian Standards?

The IRC is a signatory of the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS) and an active member of the CHS Alliance. CHS is a quality reference framework that ensures communities and people affected by crisis are at the center of humanitarian action. CHS was developed through a global consultation process with humanitarian workers, communities and people affected by crisis, several hundred Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and networks, governments, United Nations and donor agencies. CHS is the industry standard for program quality and is used by an increasing number of donors to ensure program quality.

CHS sets out nine commitments to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response provide. It describes critical elements of principled, accountable and high-quality assistance, placing communities and individuals affected by crisis at the center of humanitarian action. It brings together key elements of existing humanitarian principles and standards such as Sphere's Humanitarian Charter, the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality as well as protection mainstreaming principles.

How has IMPACT considered CHS?

The IMPACT Standards aim to ensure our compliance with the nine CHS commitments. In combination with internal IRC policies - Safeguarding and The IRC Way - IMPACT significantly aligns with CHS:

IMPACT STANDARD

CHS COMMITMENT	Informed	Measure	Partner	Adapt	Client-centered	Transformative	RELEVANT IRC POLICY
1 Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
2 Humanitarian response is effective and timely.		▲		▲	▲	▲	
3 Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.	▲		▲	▲	▲	▲	The IRC Way
4 Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.					▲	▲	
5 Complaints are welcomed and addressed.					▲	▲	Safeguarding Policy
6 Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.	▲		▲	▲			
7 Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve.	▲	▲	▲	▲			
8 Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably.	▲						The IRC Way
9 Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose.	▲						The IRC Way, Safeguarding Policy

MEAL & IMPACT Standards

IMPACT is the Crisis Response, Recovery and Development Department's Program Quality Framework. The acronym of the word 'IMPACT' defines program quality through six Principles: Informed, Measure, Partner, Adapt, Client-centered and Transformative. The IMPACT Framework is comprised of eighteen standards for programming across three phases: Prepare, Design and Implement. Prepare relates to country program-level preparation and strategic thinking. Design and Implement relate to the project cycle.

The three Measure Standards are addressed in the MEAL handbook and focus on Measurement. Where the three Measure Standards provide high-level guidance, the MEAL handbook articulates IRC's step-by-step approach to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning to improve our programming and, ultimately, the lives of our clients. By meeting the MEAL standards, Country Offices are also fulfilling Measure in the IMPACT framework. The MEAL handbook also supports key elements of the Client-centered Standards of IMPACT under Design and Implement. The table below shows the Measure Standards, the corresponding MEAL Recommended Programmatic Practices and the MEAL Standards required to meet them.

PREPARE

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 1

We put in place standardized tools, procedures and routines to measure outcomes, scale, quality and client satisfaction.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 1 — M1.1

We develop MEAL standardized tools and procedures to harmonize data collection and management across projects for SAP priority outcomes.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 2 — M1.2

We analyze and visualize data (disaggregated by gender, age, and where possible disability and other contextually relevant characteristics) at the program level to inform adaptation and future designs.

DESIGN

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 2

We plan and budget for the measurement and analysis of IRC core and donor indicators.

MEAL STANDARD 1 — M2.1

A theory of change and a logframe are developed using client feedback, data, evidence and learning.

MEAL STANDARD 2 — M2.2

Requirements, costs and staffing for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning are defined in project proposals.

MEAL STANDARD 3 — M2.3

A monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning plan is created to guide the collection, management and use of data.

MEAL STANDARD 4 — M2.4

Data collection and management systems are established using IRC tools in consultation with relevant sector and program teams.

IMPLEMENT

IMPACT STANDARD: MEASURE 3

We collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender, age, and where possible disability and other contextually relevant characteristics.

MEAL STANDARD 5 — M3.1

Data is collected ethically using the appropriate disaggregation and methodologies and is checked to ensure quality.

MEAL STANDARD 6 — M3.2

Data is analyzed and presented to understand performance, make decisions and adapt programming.

MEAL STANDARD 7 — M3.3

Findings and resulting adaptations are captured, stored and shared to maximize learning, and to provide evidence for past, current and future programming decisions