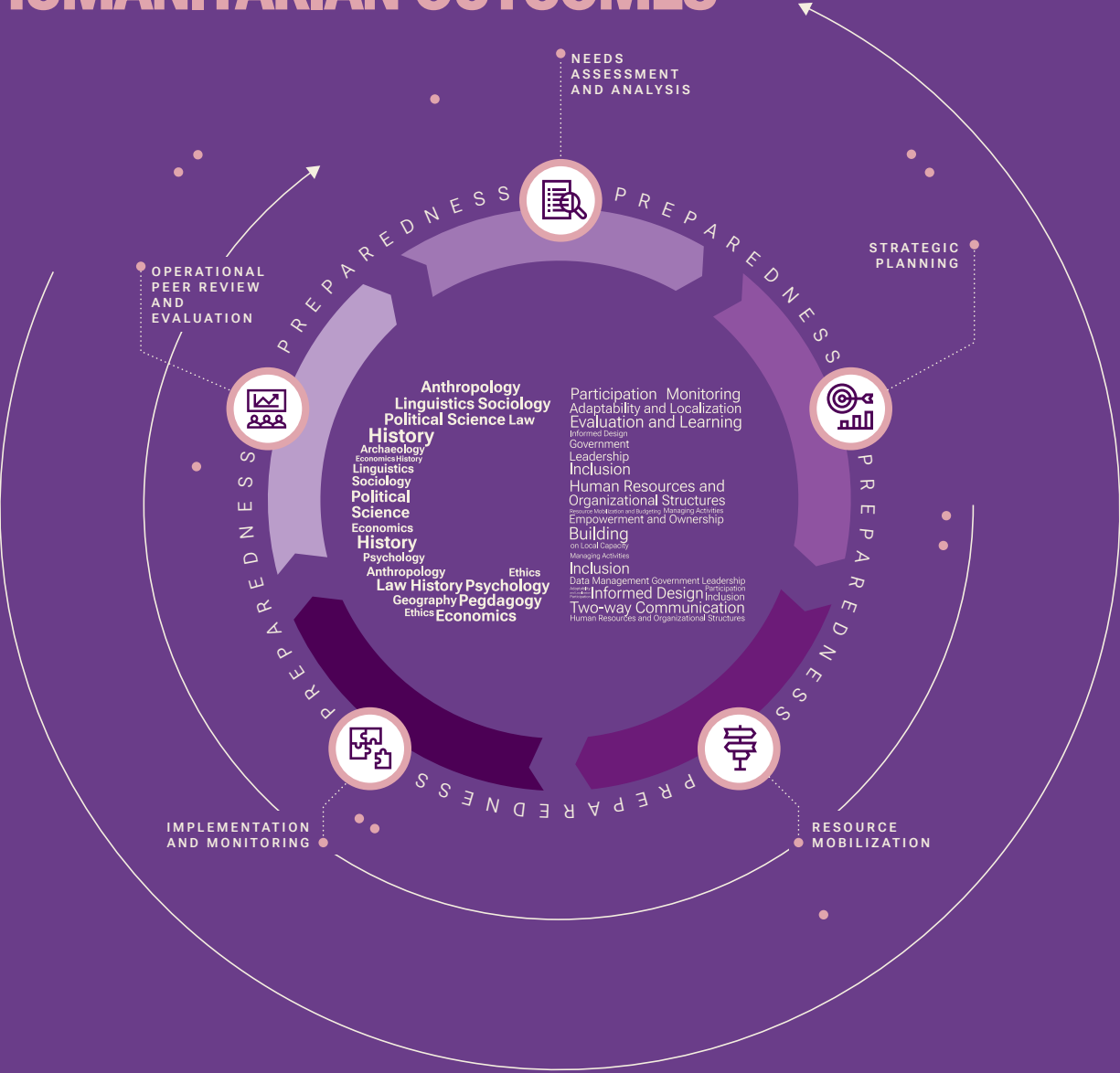


SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

VISION PAPER ON THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO ATTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP) AND SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) IN HUMANITARIAN OUTCOMES



Social Sciences for Community
Engagement in Humanitarian Action
**Vision Paper on the Role of Community
Engagement to Attaining Accountability
to Affected Populations (AAP) and
Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) in
Humanitarian Outcomes**

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Foreword

Looking Ahead: Bridging theory and practice



Social Science for Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action Project (SS4CE in HA) is an initiative launched at the end of 2020, funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs, USAID. The main objectives focus on co-creation of global goods, designed as a collaborative approach that connects with global humanitarian and public health system-wide existing mechanisms that harness active participation of humanitarian organizations, academic institutions, and donors. The processes undertaken for the development of global goods are also further framed in the 'decolonization of aid agenda' and provide clear recommendations for the implementation of actions that drive people-centred and community-led humanitarian and development programs. As envisioned, the project has made substantive progress towards systematically aligning social science informed community engagement actions to humanitarian architecture, tailored to different elements and enablers of the humanitarian program cycle (HPC).

Leveraging on the initial, exclusive public health emergency (PHE) focus at the time, due to the COVID-19 response, the SS4CE project developed a multi-pronged, governance structure that could facilitate the linkages and inform all humanitarian crises (e.g., natural hazards, conflicts and PHEs).

This governance structure provided technical oversight to the development of SS4CE global goods, as well as positioning the processes and outputs of the project with key humanitarian stakeholders including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), Clusters and committees, for the uptake and mainstreaming within the ongoing and relevant humanitarian program processes.

The Vision Paper on Community Engagement for Accountability to Affected Populations and Social and Behavior Change seeks to contribute to the development of a common vision of CE to achieve AAP and SBC during humanitarian action. This vision was developed through the facilitation of a consultation process among multiple humanitarian actors. The process involved establishing a common understanding on the evolution of community engagement and integration of actions within the humanitarian sector, as well as harmonising the way in which CE can be and is used towards the progress and achievement of AAP and SBC across multiple institutions and stakeholders.

Community engagement, informed by social sciences, addresses participation issues and the immediate needs of the affected communities but also strengthens community systems where marginalised groups become equal partners in finding solutions, having wider knowledge and understanding of social science disciplines' conceptual frameworks (e.g., historical, political, sociological, economical) and providing pathways to deal with systemic fallacies and challenges (i.e., social justice, gender equity, decolonization and localization).

We hope that this Vision Paper will contribute to evolving and identifying actions to reform community engagement processes, especially leveraging the spectrum of social sciences in challenging humanitarian contexts. This will be of utmost importance to respond effectively in current and future crises.

UNICEF, Vincent Petit

Key deliverables for the project are:

- Landscape report
- Ethics and Data Sharing Mapping Review
- Codes of Conduct Mapping Review
- Mapping of Capacity Development for the application of SS4CE in HA in Conflicts and Hazards
- Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Community Engagement
- Compendium of Case Studies on the Use of community engagement to Inform Decision Making
- Desk Review of Community Engagement Indicators Across Humanitarian Response Plans (2022) and Documentation on Community Engagement
- **Vision Paper on Community Engagement for Accountability to Affected Populations and Social and Behavior Change.**
- Common Principles and Code of Conduct for the Application of SS4CE in HA

Acknowledgements

The Vision Paper on the Role of Community Engagement to attain Accountability to Affected Populations and Social and Behavior Change in Humanitarian Action is an output of the Technical Working Group-3 (TWG-3), part of ‘Social Science for Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action (SS4CE in HA)’ project convened by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), with support of the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

During June-December 2022, TWG3 (see partners below in box xxx) was co-chaired by Nayana Das (REACH) and Anu Puri (UNICEF, SS4CE), with technical guidance and oversight by Rania

Elessawi (UNICEF, SS4CE in HA), during which consultations and meetings were facilitated to consolidate technical inputs of TWG-3.

The Vision Paper was prepared with the collaboration of: Rodrigo Mena (International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam); David Napier and Anna-Maria Volkman (Sonar Global) and Anu Puri, Rania Elessawi and Rebecca Smith (UNICEF). The paper was also reviewed by Heléne Clark (Actknowldege) and David Schoeller-Diaz, Ivan Contreras, and Jorge Becerra (IMMAP).

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List of Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
CCEA	Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability
CCEI	Communication and Community Engagement Initiative
CE	Community Engagement
CEMS	Community Engagement Minimum Standards and Indicators
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CwC	Communicating with Communities (CwC)
GB	the Grand Bargain

HA	Humanitarian Action
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
IASC	Inter Agency Standard Committee
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
SBC	Social and Behavioral Change
SS4CE in HA	Social Sciences for Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

A photograph of two women wading through shallow water. The woman on the left is wearing a red and black checkered dress and a matching headscarf. The woman on the right is wearing a black headscarf with a green and white floral pattern and a red dress. They are both barefoot and appear to be carrying water. The background is a vast, flat landscape under a clear sky.

1.0 Introduction

This paper seeks to present a vision on the role of **Community Engagement (CE)** to **attaining Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)** and **Social and Behaviour Change (SBC)** towards contributing to humanitarian outcomes. It emphasises on the need to standardise terminologies, including objectives, methods and outcomes used to engage crisis affected communities and the role CE plays in humanitarian programming.

The development of the document was carried out by members of the Technical Working Group-3, as part of the Social Science for Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action project. It seeks to contribute to the development of a common vision of CE to achieve AAP and SBC during humanitarian action. This vision

was developed through the facilitation of a consultation process among multiple humanitarian actors (see Box xxx). The process involved establishing a common understanding on the evolution of CE and integration of actions within the humanitarian sector, as well as harmonising the way in which CE can be and is used towards the progress and achievement of AAP and SBC across multiple institutions and stakeholders.

In the following sections the paper outlines the rationale for this 'vision' that entails a conceptualization of the three main concepts. It also presents a Theory of Change to provide further ideas on the harmonisation of the role of CE for AAP and SBC and the intended actions to better contribute and advance humanitarian outcomes.

2.0 Context Setting: Why a Vision Paper?

The decades-old advocacy for people-centred programming gained special momentum and attention in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016. One of the main outcomes was the recognition of the need to develop a better framework to develop more participatory, local and accountable humanitarian action.¹ The result was The Agenda for Humanity, a five-point plan that outlines the changes that are needed to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability on a global scale.²

To achieve this, more than a dozen initiatives, partnerships, platforms and alliances were either newly developed or strengthened through the WHS process to help implement the five Core Responsibilities and turn the 'Agenda for Humanity' into reality. For example, the WHO main outcome, 'The Grand Bargain' (GB), dedicated its sixth workstream to the 'Participation Revolution', and the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) on Quality and Accountability mainstreamed CE in the humanitarian programme cycle, to empower local actors and affected communities and enhancing their participation in humanitarian action.³ Moreover, to promote the sustainability and better integration of humanitarian action, the WHS and the Agenda was kept fully aligned with the Sustainable Development 2030 agenda while laying emphasis on humanitarian organisations to work differently in diverse contexts.

To achieve the above, AAP and SBC have been recognized to contribute to strategic outcomes. Not only do the Agenda and the GB emphasis on the need for humanitarian actors and organizations to be accountable to people affected, but it also recognizes that SBC is needed to expand the role that people already have over the decisions that affect their lives. There are increasing efforts to leverage the required resources and commitments to integrate the operational as well as programmatic components of AAP and SBC within the humanitarian architecture, ensuring all elements of people-centred humanitarian action get addressed to make programmes efficient and have sustainable results for communities.

One risk, during the implementation of AAP and SBC initiatives, is the tendency to adopt top-down approaches and prioritize the programme's effectiveness over fostering meaningful engagement and promoting people's well-being. The importance of CE in achieving successful outcomes in AAP and SBC within the humanitarian context has been widely acknowledged.⁴ It is essential to thoroughly understand the interplay between CE, and AAP and SBC, recognizing the distinct contributions that CE brings to these initiatives, how those contributions can vary across different organizations and by emphasizing the need for contextual adaptation and tailored approaches. While facilitating CE 'as an umbrella' bridging AAP and SBC to elevate critical interventions (e.g., empowerment or two-way communication), it is important to acknowledge that this process continues to evolve and is a work in progress. This realization serves as the driving force behind this paper and the ongoing efforts to explore and advance our understanding in this field.





3.0 Understanding AAP and SBC in the Humanitarian Context

AAP is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by, the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist.⁵ In humanitarian action, this includes enabling affected people to meet their different needs, address their vulnerabilities, build on pre-existing capacities and drive programme adaptation through:

1. systematically sharing timely, relevant and actionable information with communities;
2. supporting the meaningful participation and leadership of affected people in decision making, regardless of sex, age, disability status and other diversities;
3. ensuring community feedback systems are in place to enable affected people to assess and comment on the performance of humanitarian action.

AAP is defined by global commitments and standards (Inter-Agency Standing Committee/IASC Commitments on AAP and Core Humanitarian Standards/CHS on Quality and Accountability) within the global humanitarian architecture and is further institutionalised through country accountability mechanisms, nationally and locally.⁶ AAP facilitates opportunities for people to influence their own lives and future by playing an active role in designing and managing humanitarian programmes, voicing their concerns through trusted feedback mechanisms and participating in decision-making processes.

SBC on the other hand aims to empower individuals and communities, and lower structural barriers, that hinder people from adopting positive practices and societies from becoming more equitable, inclusive, cohesive and peaceful.⁷ Drawing on various disciplines (from sociology and psychology to communication and behavioural economics), SBC encompasses any set of strategies and interventions that influences drivers of change and supports local action towards better societies. It helps development practitioners and policymakers design more effective programmes for reducing poverty and inequity. Most importantly it blends scientific knowledge with community insights, to expand people's control over the decisions that affect their lives (SBC Programme Guidance, UNICEF, May 2022). The relevance for SBC has been proven time and again, in global humanitarian crises and public health emergencies (Ebola, Zika, COVID-19, as a critical pathway to climate change mitigation efforts). There is evidence that timely SBC interventions complement cluster/sector priorities and can drive better results during response efforts by identifying more complex, underlying social and behavioural barriers and drivers, engaging with local stakeholders and those who are most vulnerable as equal partners, to address issues that affect their lives. Despite the progress made and evidence, systematic investments and resources for SBC continue to generally be complementary, reactive, process oriented, and often *ad hoc*.

4.0 Understanding Community Engagement: Progress and Driving Systems Change

Seen as a *foundational action*, CE aims to “empower communities, community leaders and community organizations to play a role in improving the equity and impact of the government, development, and humanitarian initiatives that affect them.”⁸ By bringing together multiple principles, strategies and actions via multiple stakeholders, CE can promote and empower social groups to attain collective outcomes aiming to address the issues affecting lives. In practical terms, it can be used as a **primary approach** for “strengthening community capacity to explore, plan and act together on issues identified by communities themselves”, or as an instrumental approach⁹ that uses engagement or mobilization methodologies to accomplish goals or outcomes like health, education, nutrition, or social welfare outcomes, in a participatory and empowering manner that promotes sustainability.⁹

CE is seen as an important component of humanitarian programmes, contributing to empowering and linking local systems and structures, resulting in strengthened governance, quality of service delivery and improved accountability mechanisms. At the same time CE can contribute to balancing power dynamics, ensuring inclusive participation and decision making; preserving dignity.¹⁰

It is important to understand how CE has progressively evolved within the humanitarian agenda and how this connects with humanitarian programming. The following timeline outlines events that created momentum, contributing to prioritising CE efforts, particularly in the advancement of accountability and advocacy strategies in the humanitarian sector. Annex 9.1 presents a more detailed timeline of events that lead to defining and fostering the development of CE as a notion and its commitments.

Community engagement timeline

2016 - The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS):

Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016. This generated commitments from a broad range of humanitarian actors designed to reduce suffering and deliver more effectively for people around the globe. Accountability to affected people was an important theme in the commitments developed throughout the Summit, demonstrating a clear recognition that people are the central agents of their lives and are the first and last responders to any crisis.¹¹

2016 - The Grand Bargain:

The agreement took place between more than 30 of the largest donors, aid organizations and other stakeholders in the humanitarian sector to transform the way humanitarian assistance is provided, including a participation revolution to properly acknowledge the role people receiving aid can influence or engage in the decisions that affect their lives. This agreement aimed to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of humanitarian action by improving the way aid is delivered, funded and governed. In terms of CE, The Grand Bargain recognized the importance of involving communities in the design and implementation of humanitarian response. One of the key elements of the agreement was the promotion of ‘localization’ – a principle that calls for increased support to local actors, including civil society organizations, to take a leading role in responding to humanitarian crises. By involving communities in the humanitarian response, aid organizations can better understand the needs and capacities of local populations and can work to deliver aid that is more relevant and effective. Additionally, by empowering local actors, The Grand Bargain aimed to build resilience and promote self-reliance in affected communities, which could help to reduce their vulnerability to future crises.

2016 - Global Workshop on Communications and Community Engagement:

UNICEF and IFRC organized a global workshop to enhance the humanitarian system’s engagement and communication with affected communities. The workshop was the result of several months of consultations with key stakeholders, including UN agencies, civil society organizations, donors, academia and the media. The discussions at the workshop emphasized the

importance of empowering affected people with information and involving communities in shaping aid priorities and programme design to make the assistance accountable, relevant and adapted to their needs. As a result of the workshop, UNICEF committed to developing a global communication and CE initiative for up to three years to support collective accountability to affected people.¹²

2017 - Communication and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI):

In January 2017, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in cooperation with the CDAC Secretariat (Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities), launched the Communication and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI), a global initiative that aims to “organize a collective service to address the need for a more systematic and coordinated approach to communications and community engagement with affected people.”¹³

2018 - Guidance Notes and Indicators to supplement the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS):

Aimed to be applied by all humanitarian actors and organizations involved in planning, managing or implementing a humanitarian response, this document provides clarification on the Key Actions and Organizational Responsibilities laid out in the CHS and examines some of the practical challenges that may arise when applying the CHS. It provides indicators and guiding questions to promote measurement of progress towards meeting the standard and drive continuous learning and improvement. This guidance places communities and people affected by crises at the centre of humanitarian action.¹⁴

2018-2019 - Community Engagement Minimum Standards and Indicators (CEMS):

UNICEF C4D through a collaborative, co-creation process with key development and humanitarian organizations and stakeholders, developed “minimum quality standards and indicators for community engagement.” This global guidance established guidance on the contribution of community engagement in development practice as well as humanitarian action. The objective of the standards and indicators is to support implementation of high quality, evidence-based community engagement at scale in development and humanitarian contexts.¹⁵

2022-2023 - CE Common M&E Framework and other products on CE:

Leveraging the foundation of the CEMS, UNICEF and key partners produced a Common M&E Framework that could facilitate consistent and effective assessment of CE interventions and inform the integration of CE data into the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and strategic decision-making processes. Likewise, a desk review and compendium of case studies advanced the understanding of the need, generation and use of CE data in practice.

The above encapsulates the latest developments in ongoing efforts, that have been progressing for decades, to advance commitments towards CE. Bringing together civil society, government, opinion groups and leaders is the purpose of CE; to actively acknowledge and define the commitments and actions required to address the issues that impact affected and at-risk population lives in connection with concrete humanitarian programmes. Moreover, CE leverages and builds upon local strengths and capacities while improving local participation and ownership of programmes to influence the adaptation of projects; interventions and procedures that are intended to have outcomes at community level. Through CE principles and strategies, all stakeholders gain access to processes for assessing, analysing, planning, leading, implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions, programmes and policies that will promote survival, development, protection and participation.¹⁶



2022-2023

● CE Common M&E Framework and other products on CE

2018-2019

● Community Engagement Minimum Standards and Indicators (CEMS)

2018

● Guidance Notes and Indicators to supplement the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)

2017

● Communication and Community Engagement Initiative (CCEI)

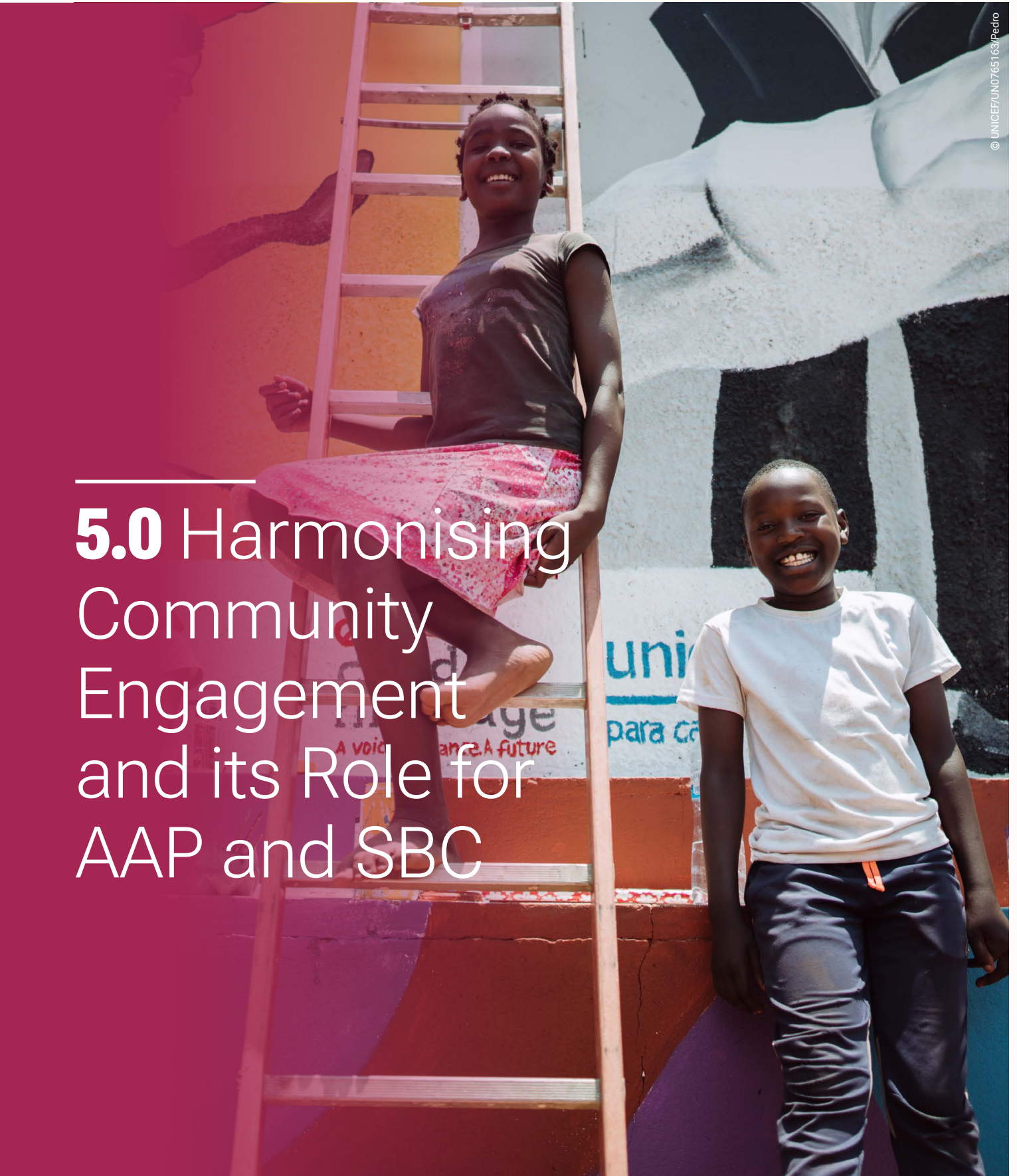
2016

● The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)

● The Grand Bargain

● Global Workshop on Communications and Community Engagement

5.0 Harmonising Community Engagement and its Role for AAP and SBC



CE can be a critical link between AAP and SBC humanitarian interventions. As presented above, it has been promoted as an approach to engage communities to explore, plan and act together on the issues impacting their lives. These issues could range from inequity and marginalisation, social cohesion, economic volatility or aid programmes that are not designed to serve the people they expect to reach. This process leads to enhanced governance, improved quality of service delivery, and the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms. Simultaneously, CE plays a significant role in addressing power imbalances, fostering inclusive participation, and facilitating decision-making processes. CE is an important element of humanitarian programmes, operating inherently by empowering and connecting local systems and structures. This process leads to strengthened governance, improved quality of service delivery and the improved accountability mechanisms. Simultaneously, CE contributes to addressing balancing power dynamics, fostering inclusive participation and facilitating decision-making processes.

Notwithstanding this, persistent challenges in advancing CE arise from diverse interpretations of how it is understood, defined and implemented across various organizations and institutions. Current discourses in the humanitarian sector highlight the significance of CE as a vehicle for change and how critical CE can be during humanitarian emergencies, such as:

- Communicating with Communities (CwC);
- Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability (CCEA); and
- Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE).

The different definitions and implementation of CE relate to the mandate, and type of work, of each organisation or institution. Nevertheless, they all have the same objective to ensure participation and collaborative work with communities, to address equality and at the same time improve effective and efficient disbursement of aid.

Annex 10.2 presents a detailed account on the role of CE in AAP and SBC and areas of overlap. Through this summary it is possible to observe how CE is understood:

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA within AAP):

AAP is backed by global standards and frameworks, IASC commitments to AAP and CHS for Quality and Accountability (especially commitment 4 & 5). It is well integrated in Grand

Bargain 2.0 and refers to Community Engagement Minimum Standards to strengthen local capacities and ownership. As noted, CE involves building relationships with communities, understanding their needs, and involving them in decision-making processes. Accordingly, CE is crucial to AAP because three out of the core seven principles identify specific CE interventions to allow organizations to understand the impact of their actions on the community, identify and ensure participation, and respond to feedback received to improve humanitarian programmes. CE is considered a means to promote accountability of humanitarian actors ensuring that input, feedback, and suggestions provided by communities are taken seriously and acted upon. Within this framework CE ideally informs strategic humanitarian decisions, as well as cluster accountabilities, and aims to ensure 'closing the loop' by telling people about the actions taken to respond to their views and concerns. In all its forms, it is a participatory process. Moreover, evidence, experience, and common sense clearly suggest that when communities are truly engaged, then they play an active role in designing and managing programmes and operations, the outcomes are more effective, sustainable, and of a higher quality (Source: RCRC, 2021, [Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability](#).)

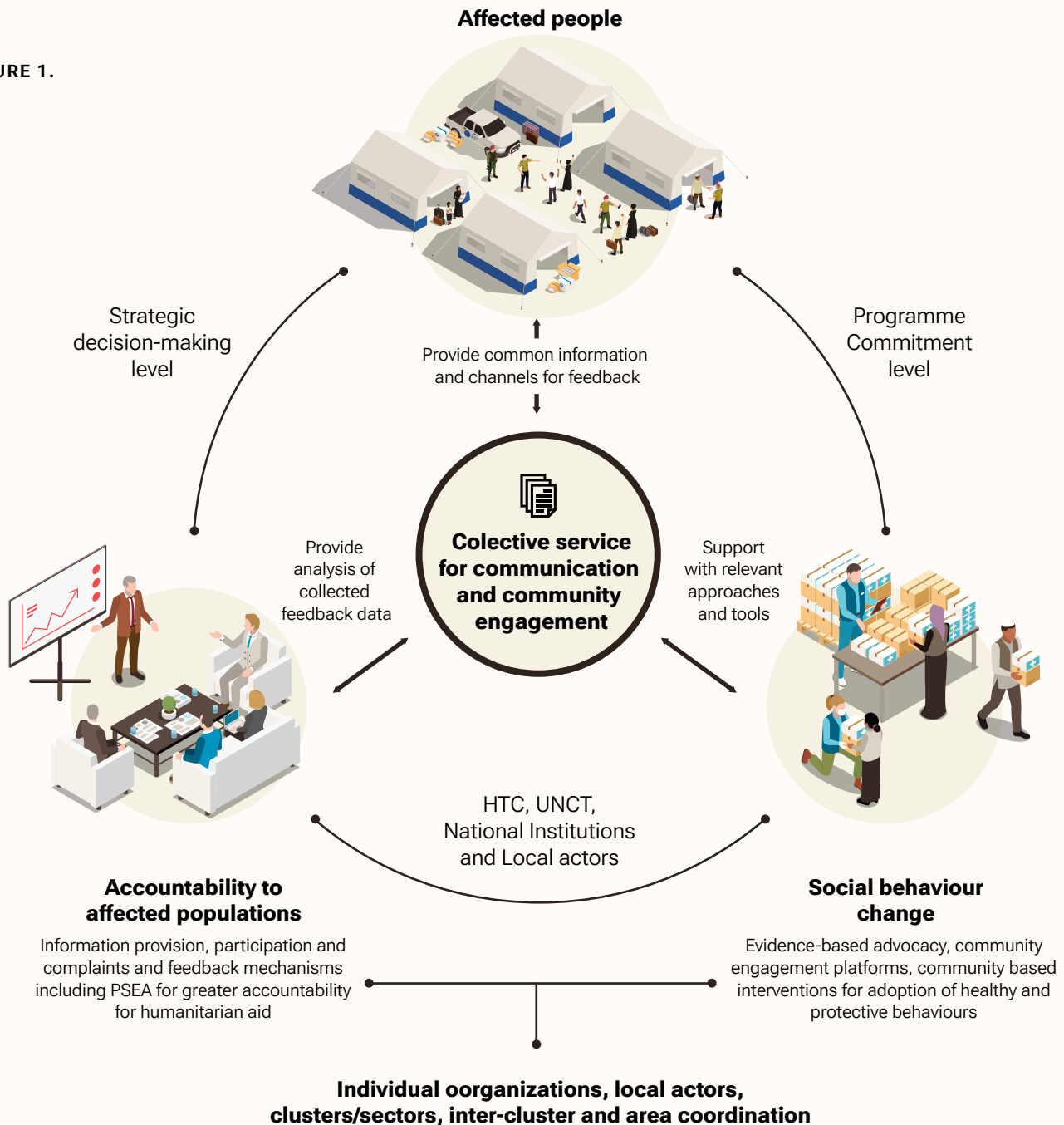
Community Engagement and Social and Behaviour Change (CE, SBC):

CE and SBC encompass both a change strategy and a set of outcomes that play a vital role in attaining the SDGs and humanitarian objectives. It is a fundamental strategy that leverages multiple approaches that support, promote and improve positive behaviours while working at the social change level to address social and gender norms for children, families and communities at scale. CE, SBC combines programmatic approaches addressing the cognitive, social, cultural, economic and structural determinants towards the realization of human rights and can facilitate pathways to ensuring equity, transparency, inclusion and trust – at the individual level, as well as broader community and social ecosystem levels. The strategy aims to contribute to positive social transformation and address challenges that cut across, and go beyond, sectoral programming. There is growing evidence that has shown that CE, SBC approaches, implemented across different humanitarian contexts, can lead to optimal decision making at individual, family and community levels. Moreover, these strategies have proven instrumental in facilitating behavioural outcomes, e.g., service-seeking behaviours and protective practices.¹⁷ CE, SBC fundamentally contributes to improving effectiveness, quality

and sustainability of humanitarian programmes and specifically to delivering on commitments of humanitarian clusters during emergencies. In any given response, SBC can support all clusters, or prioritized multi-sectoral or specific cluster actions as identified, for service delivery coordination, integration and implementation of humanitarian programmes, from needs assessments to implementation.

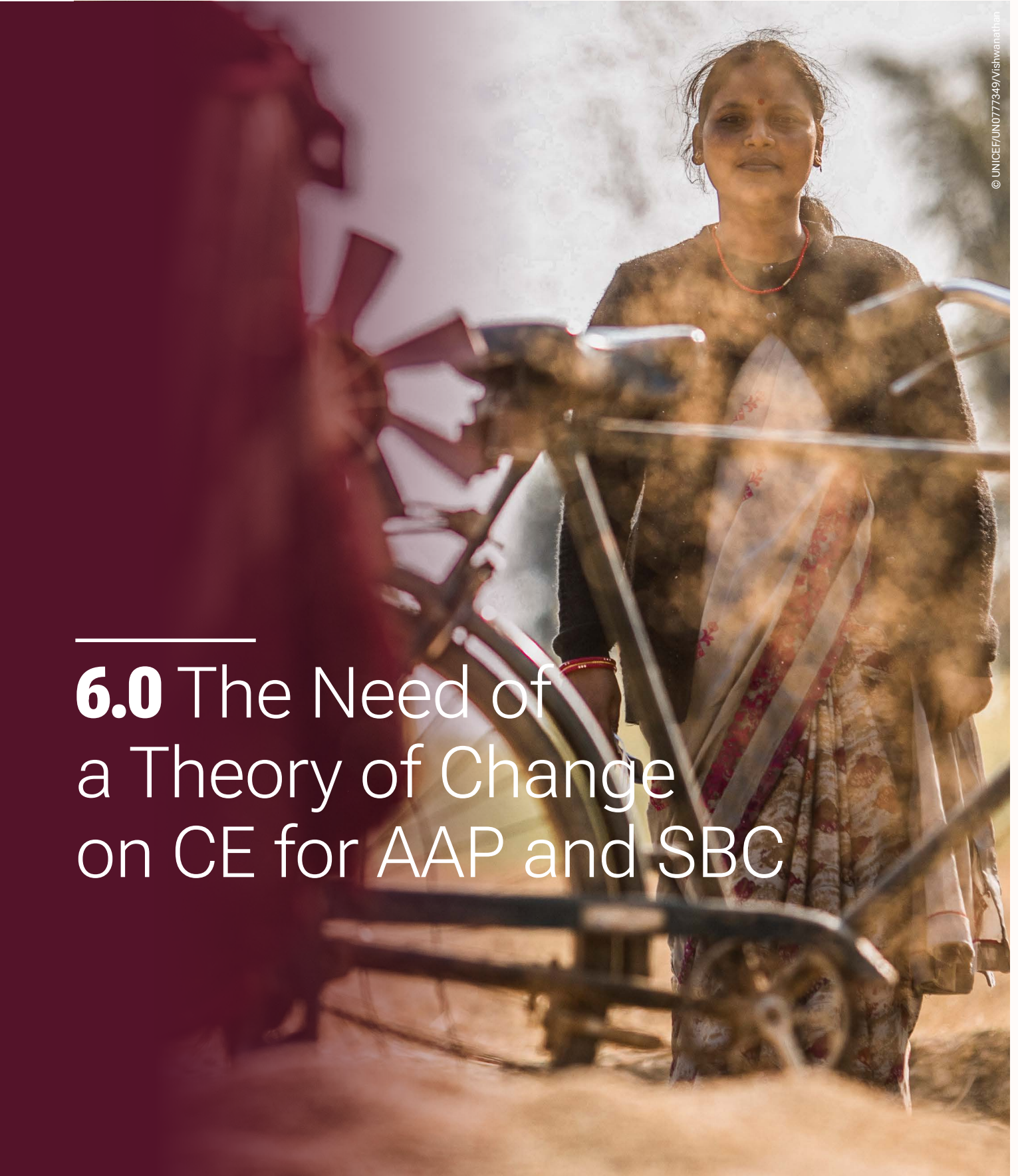
An illustration of the above can be seen in Figure 1, which places CE as a critical link to deliver on separate, and yet fundamental commitments defined through AAP and SBC across all humanitarian programmes.

FIGURE 1.



Source: Adapted from CDAC Network, 2017. *The Communication and Community Engagement Initiative. "Towards a collective service for more effective humanitarian response"* <https://www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/08/CCEI2PAGER31.05.17.pdf>

6.0 The Need of a Theory of Change on CE for AAP and SBC



As this paper aims to present a vision on the contribution of Community Engagement (CE) to humanitarian outcomes, specifically as a critical component to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC), developing a theory of change (ToC) to define programme processes, clarify assumptions, as well as results of interventions, was fundamental. The rationale for this ToC addresses the following:

- Defines and articulates the objectives and desired outcomes of a CE intervention/initiative in relation to SBC and relevance to AAP. By clarifying what CE approaches are intended to achieve in SBC, the implementing strategy can be planned, resourced and implemented more effectively.
- It is the underlying causal relationships that connect the various components needed to advance CE, especially in its relation to SBC, including activities, actors, resources and expected results. By defining clear indicators, it also allows us to evaluate and track progress over time and the role that each actor has played.
- It facilitates the alignment of efforts in the sector, both between and within organisations and among the multiple actors that need to be part of, and are accountable to, delivering effective CE, as discussed above. By clearly articulating the actors involved with the intended outcomes it allows for joint efforts and the development of a common strategy to advance CE. Furthermore, a ToC emphasises the distribution and delineation of responsibilities and can facilitate better coordination efforts of SBC and AAP.

Based on the above, the working group developed an illustrative ToC for CE,SBC that explicitly defines the role of CE within humanitarian action and specifically pivots around the CE minimum standards. The referenced overlap, or linkages, with AAP were centred around three main components – participation, life-saving information and community feedback. It is important to note that developing a comprehensive ToC of CE for AAP and SBC would require a ‘whole sector’ approach in order to promote ‘buy in’ and binding commitments on efforts and resources that are required for better, more sustainable outcomes of CE.

This document contributes with a ToC (see figures 2, 3, & 4) that seeks to illustrate a range of results at different levels that demonstrate CE contributions to SBC. Additional references are made to illustrate AAP outcomes, results and processes that are relevant and provide commonality, as well as overlap with, and through, CE,SBC efforts. A few of the key commonalities that

have consistently been at the centre of ongoing discussions, focus on the ‘centrality of community engagement’ and include:

- Both SBC and AAP’s interventions, stakeholders and strategies actively work within, and are integrated within, cluster actions and CE as a core approach to achieve cluster outcomes and results.
- AAP is leveraging CE support to humanitarian clusters and their programmes and operations to be participatory, inclusive and ensure systematic accountability to the people reached through humanitarian programmes.
- SBC interventions use CE to support and contribute to sectoral commitments, especially related to the change and improvement of enabling conditions for social and behavioural practices of communities connected to humanitarian programmes.
- *Through leveraging the assets and resources within the existing humanitarian system, it is possible to achieve a core, durable set of practices and mechanisms that integrate CE within service delivery platforms to achieve shared humanitarian outcomes.*


Figure 2 presents the six core CE Minimum Standards and the seven AAP pillars that are foundational to the ToC as guiding principles and quality benchmarks rather than as results in and of themselves. The results hierarchy links a selection of possible CE,SBC results while also highlighting (outlined in blue) where there are overlapping or shared results with AAP. While AAP ensures the institutionalization of accountability mechanisms and processes, SBC contributions encompass a broader set of results that contribute to the realization of impactful sectoral/SDG-specific outcomes.

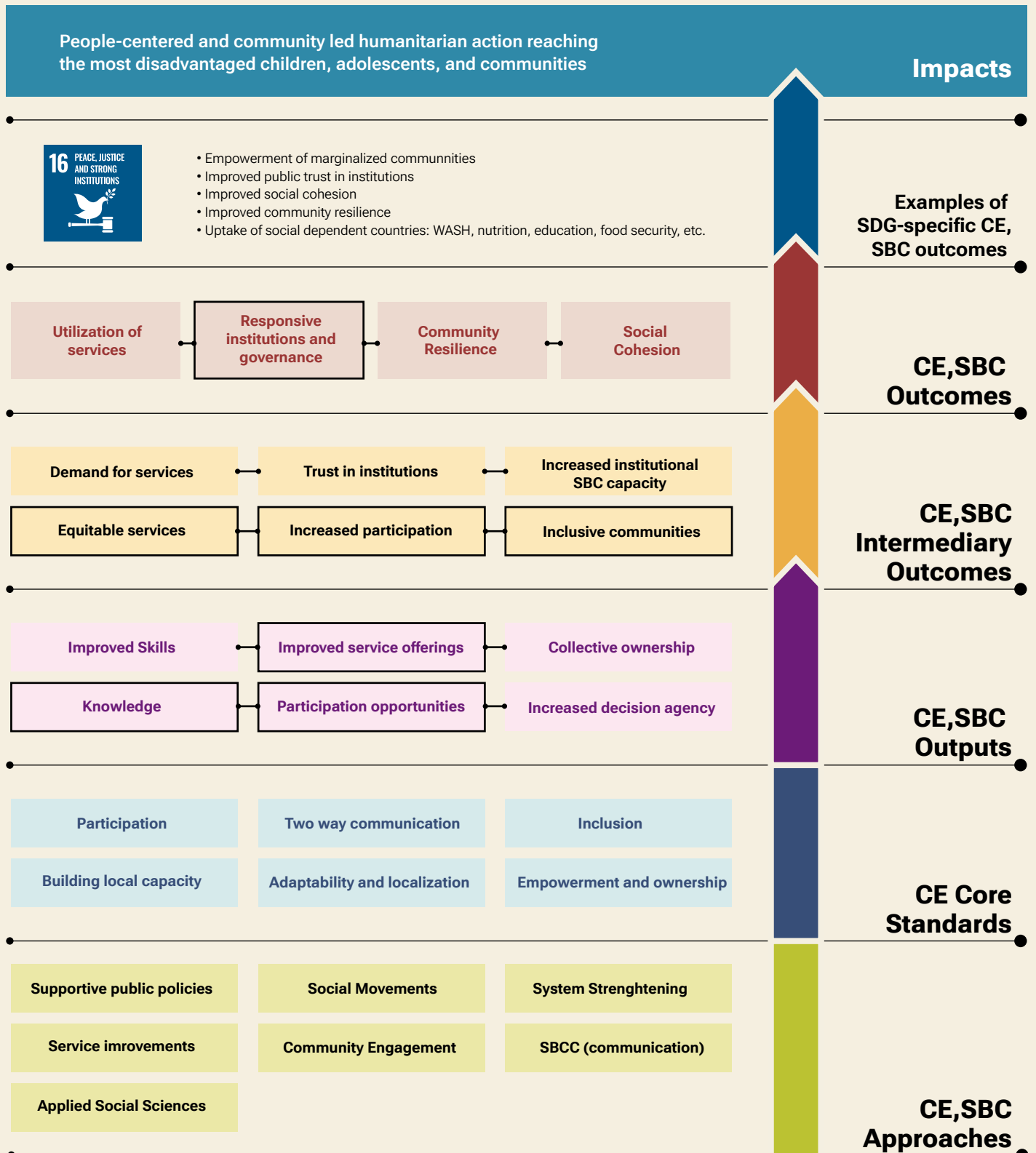


FIGURE 2. ToC: CE,SBC in Humanitarian Action

Reference: ToC, UNICEF, Global SBC

SBC THEORY OF CHANGE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

 *Shared CE, SBC/AAP results



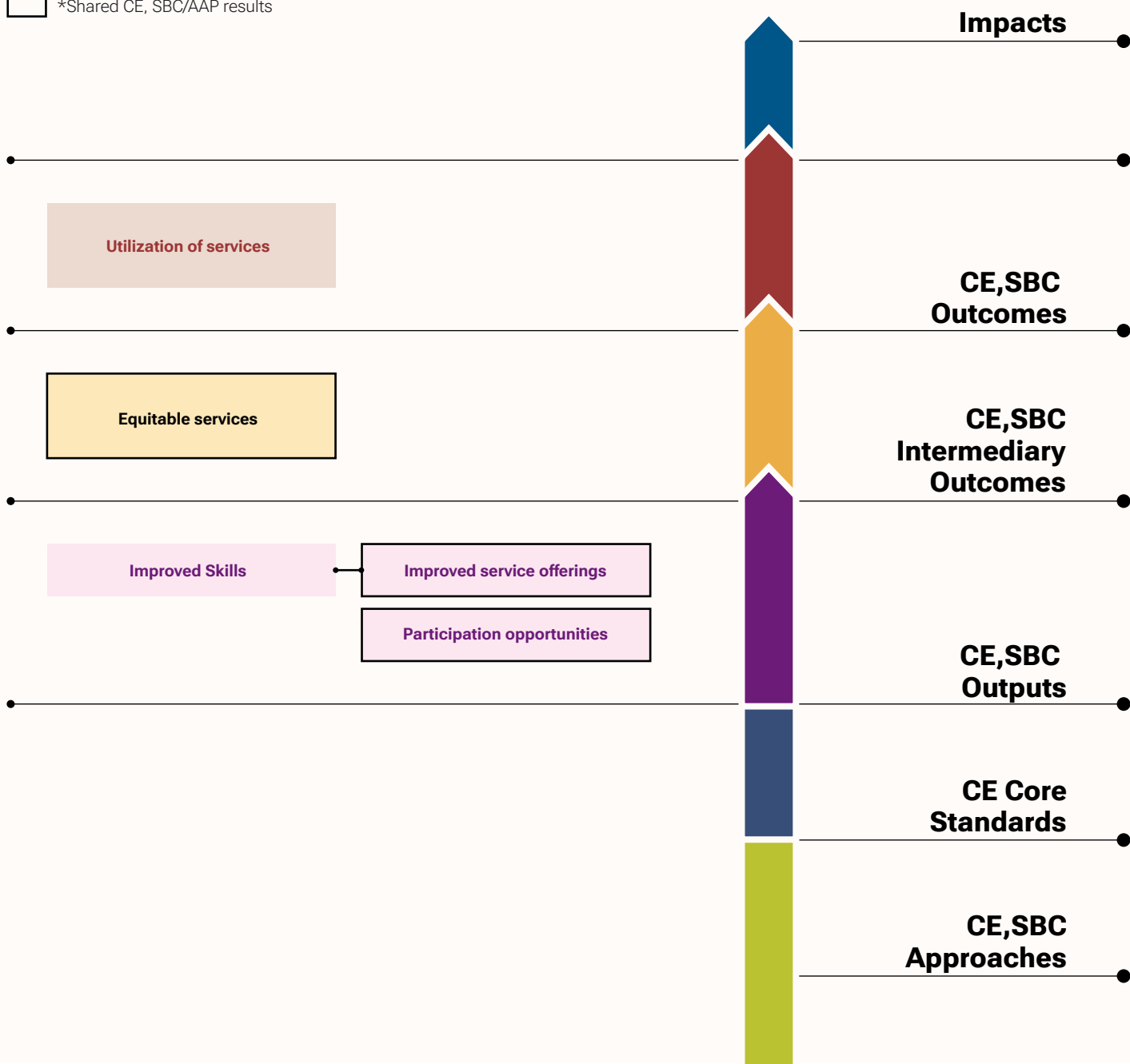
The ToC is designed to be flexible and adaptable to diverse humanitarian contexts, actors and interventions. It includes results for individuals (e.g., improved skills, increased decision agency) as well as at community level (e.g., collective ownership, inclusive communities) that contribute to outcome-level changes in behaviours and practices and societal systems and relations. In each setting some, but not all, of the results included in the ToC will be relevant priorities for CE action. The ToC provides a framework that can assist with planning and monitoring

contextually appropriate interventions, and with the identification of activities and implementation strategies that are best suited to achieving desired results.

The figure below provides an example of how a simple results pathway can be articulated within the broader picture, with black arrows linking outputs to an intermediary outcome and to a higher-order outcome.

FIGURE 3.
Example of a results pathway, applying the ToC for CE,SBC in Humanitarian Action

 *Shared CE, SBC/AAP results



At **Outcome level**, improved service offerings and delivery models encourage affected populations to access needed programmes and utilize services, contributing to the outcome. For example, this could be operationalized by measuring the extent to which community members use nutrition counselling and services for preventing malnutrition and undernutrition. Achieving and maintaining outcomes necessitates long-term efforts requiring complex, coordinated action among a range of actors and institutions, as well as a degree of change at a systemic level.

The **Intermediary outcomes** of equitable services reflect the importance of providing services that are accessible, relevant and appropriate to the varied needs of affected populations. To achieve equitable services, providers may demonstrate AAP through intentional co-design of service models with, and for, underserved groups and through utilizing established feedback mechanisms.

At **Output level**, improved skills, improved service offerings and participation opportunities all contribute to achieving equitable services. Training and educational activities increase the capacities of service providers and stakeholders to improve service utilization, while CE that links institutions and services providers with community members can inform resource allocations for more relevant services to meet user needs.

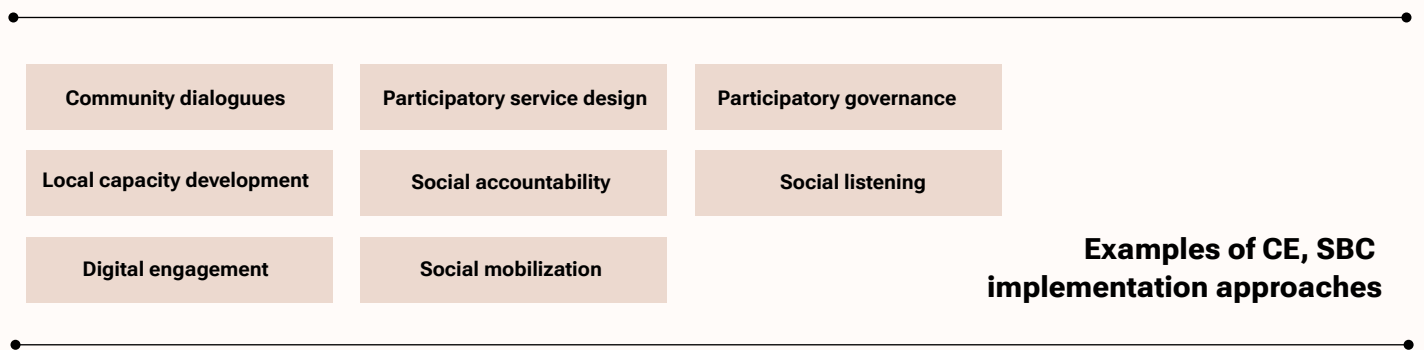
Participation in community-level activities encourages the provision of services that reflect community priorities and considers diverse user needs.

Enabling conditions, using the CE Minimum Standards and the AAP pillars are also critical to the achievement of results in this pathway. These conditions include: respecting and leveraging existing community structures and leadership; cultural and linguistic proficiency in the local context; capacities to facilitate the meaningful participation of underserved groups (e.g., disabilities, gender, age); and sustained funding allocations for quality CE activities within communities.

In any humanitarian context, there is a range of possible CE activities and interventions that could potentially be undertaken. By articulating the most important results pathways, humanitarian actors can use the ToC to help determine which implementing approaches are best suited to achieve different results. The range of CE,SBC implementing approaches include, but are not limited to, the following:

The ToC supports the development of more detailed results frameworks for measuring CE contribution to SBC and AAP outcomes, contextualised for unique emergency settings. A second sample results pathway within the ToC can be found in Annex 9.1

FIGURE 4.
Examples of CE,SBC implementation approaches



7.0 Closing remarks

This paper discussed a vision of the role of Community Engagement (CE) in achieving Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) in humanitarian outcomes. Together with outlining the reasons for this, a conceptualization of these three main concepts, including a timeline on how CE has evolved (and has been included in the humanitarian sector), was also presented. It also provides a vision for harmonizing the role of CE for AAP and SBC and an example of ToC to guide the process of attaining this vision. The efforts are important because standardizing terminologies and harmonizing the role of CE across multiple organizations can improve the effectiveness of humanitarian programming, ultimately leading to better outcomes for crisis-affected communities.

Mobilising sectoral change, to achieve a new agenda and more formal inclusion of CE for AAP and SBC, is not a straightforward endeavour; it must consider possible future challenges. Among these challenges, resistance to change in the sector is of great importance. Individuals and humanitarian organisations may resist change and fail to adopt new models and agendas, especially if it involves changing established practices or structures. There is also recognition within the sector of the past mobilisation of agendas and how difficult it is to embed these processes within individual agencies. This also brings with it the

challenge of adapting this particular CE agenda to the context and focus of each organisation's work. It is certainly not a one-size-fits-all model. It must consider that the humanitarian sector is complex with numerous stakeholders, policies and regulations. Coordinating and aligning these systems is a task that will require reciprocal efforts, resources and important organisational commitments. Therefore, lack of resources such as time, funds and expertise can hinder progress and limit the scope for CE. These need to be discussed and committed beforehand.

Mobilising sectoral change and embedding CE to link AAP and SBC also requires strong leadership to drive the process which requires organisational champions, who can act as trailblazers, to show the way forward. This leadership must be able to clearly present the need to strengthen CE in relation to AAP and SBC and the benefits of the process.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders. By implementing effective communication and engagement strategies, it becomes possible to overcome resistance and generate momentum for change. This entails a commitment to ongoing process improvement developing the ToC mentioned above, and continuing to recognise, document and learn from the steps taken.

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Annexes

- I. Extended Timeline: Actions that created momentum and foster CE
- II. Sample Results Pathway for Community Engagement

Annex I. Extended Timeline: Actions that created momentum and foster CE

1980s and 1990s Crises in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Rwanda / 'Do No Harm' approach

Crises such as the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, and the Rwandan genocide in 1994, spurred a recognition that traditional humanitarian assistance could have unintended negative consequences for local communities and their development. In her book, "Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War", Mary Anderson helped to position the 'Do No Harm' concept.¹⁸ In "Aiding Violence", Peter Uvin contributed to the understanding of tragic unintended consequences of foreign assistance in the Rwandan genocide. After a process of consultations and debates among its membership of international humanitarian organizations, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) promoted the 'Do No Harm' approach. This approach seeks to ensure that humanitarian action does not cause harm to the people it aims to assist, as well as to respect their dignity and rights. It is based on the idea that humanitarian action should not exacerbate existing conflicts or human rights violations and should not undermine local capacities for conflict resolution and recovery.

1994 - Code of Conduct for the Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

The Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Action highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity, local empowerment, and stakeholder involvement in the humanitarian response. It emphasizes the need to respect local culture and customs, involve programme beneficiaries in the administration of aid and recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings. The code also underscores the responsibility of humanitarian organizations to those they serve and to the sources of funding. These principles are key components of CE in humanitarian action, promoting accountability, transparency and building trust with communities and stakeholders. Until the adoption of the code of conduct for humanitarian agencies in 1994, accountability was not prioritized by humanitarians, who organized their domain around the idea that saving lives could never be wrong.¹⁹ It became increasingly clear that humanitarian organizations were not accountable to affected populations – and this was recognised as deeply problematic. The 1990s and 2000s have seen the creation of numerous standards and accountability initiatives.²⁰

1995 - People in Aid

While People in Aid did not have a specific focus on CE, it did recognize the importance of involving communities and other stakeholders to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian response. The organization promoted ethical and accountable practices in the humanitarian sector and sought to build trust and establish positive relationships between humanitarian organizations and the communities they serve. People in Aid's approach was informed by the principles of the Humanitarian Charter and the Sphere Project, both of which emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement in the humanitarian response. After merging with the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International, People in Aid suspended its operations, and its work was succeeded by the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

1998 - Sphere Project

Since its first iteration, the Sphere handbooks have increasingly stressed the importance of applying consistent quality standards, while contextualizing and localizing aid and placing communities at the centre of interventions. Although it does not explicitly refer to CE, it states that dialogue and collaboration with communities is critical to ensuring that aid is appropriate, relevant and effective, and that it builds trust and strengthens accountability between humanitarian organizations and the communities they serve. The Sphere Handbook provides specific guidance on practices when engaging with communities, including the need to respect local culture and customs, to involve communities in decision-making and to ensure that aid is delivered in a way that is responsive to the needs of the affected population.²¹

2003 - Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP)

HAP was a network of organizations committed to improving accountability in humanitarian action. HAP aimed to promote the principles of accountability, transparency and CE in humanitarian programming. It worked with its members to develop and implement a set of standards and best practices for accountable humanitarian action. Based on a recognition of CE, HAP developed a set of standards and guidelines that aimed to promote more effective and accountable humanitarian practices. These standards include the Humanitarian Accountability

Framework (HAF), which outlines the key principles and practices that humanitarian organizations should follow to ensure that their work is guided by the needs and perspectives of the communities they serve. HAP International also provides training, capacity building and advocacy support to its members to help them integrate CE into their humanitarian programmes and operations. In 2015, HAP merged with People in Aid and suspended its operations.

2005-2020 - Humanitarian Accountability Reports (HARs)

The first HAR was published in 2005 as an initiative from the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP). It started as an annual stock-take of ongoing discussions, through contributions from different authors. Eight reports were published between 2005 and 2013, and in 2015 HAP and People in Aid merged to become the CHS Alliance, which has continued publishing the HAR, with reports in 2015, 2018 and 2020.²²



2005 - The Humanitarian Reform

The process was initiated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, together with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2005, to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. Emergency response capacity has been reinforced at the global level according to an agreed division of labour. However, challenges remain in deploying adequate leadership; putting in place appropriate coordination mechanisms at various levels and ensuring clear mutual accountabilities, as evidenced by several major disasters over the past years. Furthermore, the application of the cluster approach has become overly process driven and, in some situations, perceived to potentially undermine rather than enable delivery.²³

2009 - CDAC Network founded

CDAC Network is the global alliance of many of the world's biggest humanitarian and media development organizations prioritizing communication, CE and accountability to affected people (CCEA). CDAC Network focuses on capacity building, technology and innovation, emergency tools, advocacy and evidence, and national platforms with the aim of bringing people together for better CCEA.²⁴

Early 2000's - Concept of Beneficiary Communications (Ben Coms)

The concept emerged in the humanitarian sector in the early 2000s, with the aim of improving communication between humanitarian organizations and the communities they serve. Ben Coms aimed to ensure that aid was delivered in a way that was appropriate, responsive to the needs of the local population and that effectively informed beneficiaries about the assistance they were receiving. However, over time, the focus on Beneficiary Communications has been largely replaced by the more comprehensive approach of Community Engagement (CE) which considers a wider range of stakeholders and considers the role of communities in shaping and implementing aid programmes, instead of passive recipients of external aid.²⁵

2010 - Haiti earthquake / Emphasis on coordination and digital technologies

The response saw a number of Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network members test common or collective approaches of communicating with communities to enable more meaningful engagement and to support affected individuals and communities to better mitigate risk and influence the humanitarian response.²⁶

Additionally, the earthquake response generated interest in leveraging technology to engage communities and enable more agile and effective aid. For example, in the book “Digital Humanitarians” by Patrick Meier, CE is discussed as a crucial aspect of digital humanitarianism. Meier emphasizes the importance of involving communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of digital humanitarian initiatives, as this helps to ensure that these initiatives are relevant, appropriate and responsive to the needs of the people they are intended to serve. The book also highlights the role that digital technologies can play in facilitating CE by providing new platforms for communication and collaboration between humanitarian organizations and the communities they serve. Using digital tools and platforms, communities can become active participants in the humanitarian response, sharing information, providing feedback and contributing to the design of programmes and services. The book argues that digital humanitarianism has the potential to transform traditional top-down approaches to humanitarian action and to enable more effective, participatory and empowering forms of CE in the humanitarian sector.²⁷

2014 - The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)

CHS sets out nine commitments, including that communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient, less at-risk, know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them, and can raise complaints that will be addressed.²⁸ Also, in 2015, the CHS Alliance emerged as a network of organizations committed to upholding and promoting CHS.²⁹

2014-2015 - Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) gained prominence during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa

Due to the highly infectious nature of the virus, engaging with communities and addressing their fears and misconceptions was essential in controlling the spread of the disease. The international community, government health agencies and humanitarian organizations worked to involve communities in the response by providing them with accurate information about the disease, its transmission and prevention, and by involving community members in the planning and implementation of Ebola response activities. RCCE also played a critical role in the safe and dignified burials of those who had died from the virus,

as well as in the contact tracing and surveillance activities. The involvement of local communities helped to build trust, reduce stigma and discrimination, and increase public awareness and understanding of the disease. In addition, community-based health workers, religious leaders and community volunteers were trained and deployed to support the response efforts. Overall, RCCE was an essential component of the Ebola response and contributed to the eventual end of the outbreak.³⁰

2015 - Senior Transformative Agenda Implementation Team (STAIT) recommendation on AAP

At the end of 2015, a missive from STAIT recommended strengthening AAP to improve the quality of the humanitarian response and to facilitate access through better acceptance of humanitarian actors by affected communities.



Annex II. Sample Results Pathway for Community Engagement

At **Outcome level**, responsive institutions and governance refers to policies, services and relief actions that are trusted, accountable and responsive to community demands and needs. In the context of COVID-19, for example, this could be understood as community members trusting the authorities and partners leading the COVID-19 response.

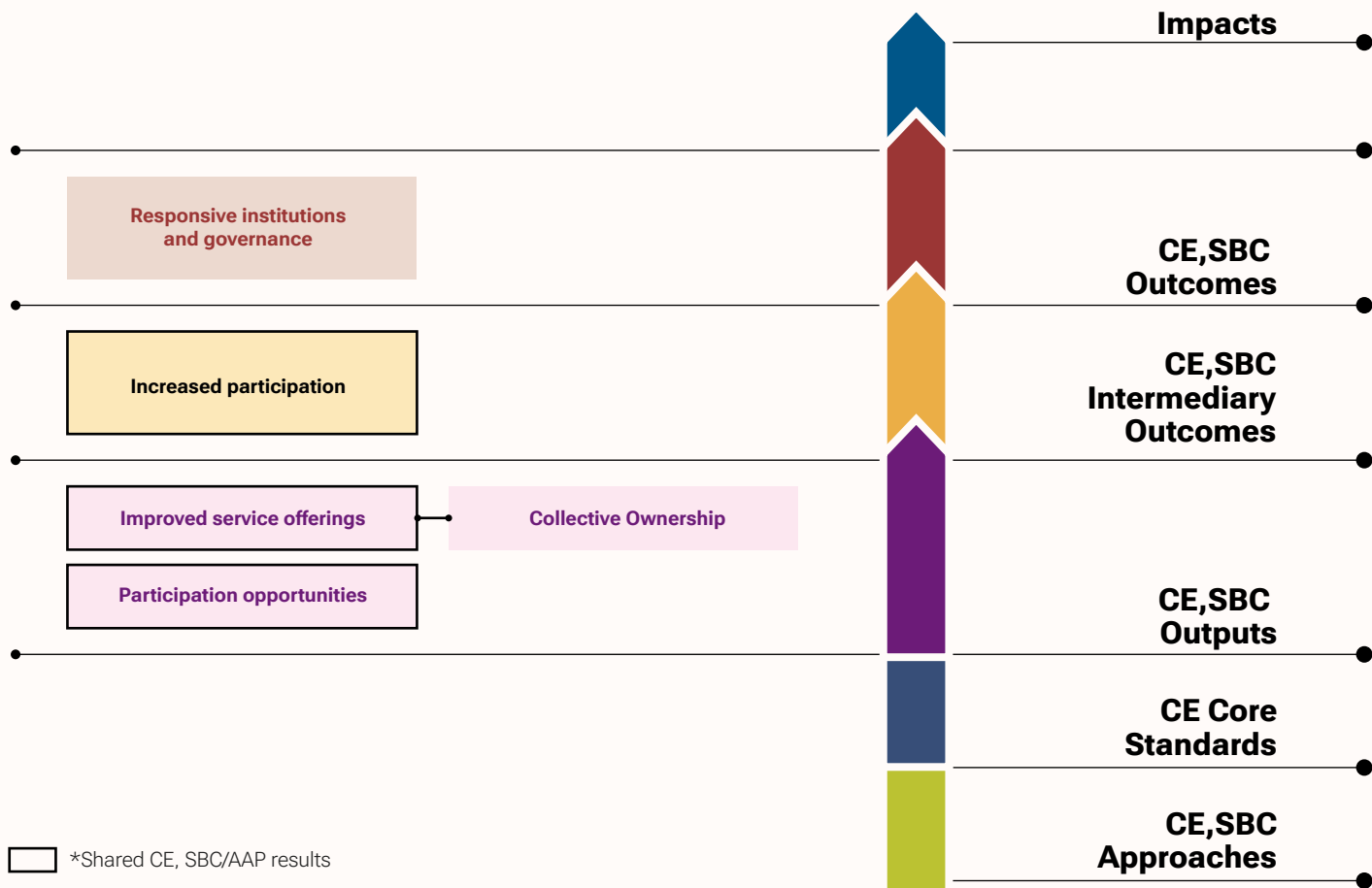
Increased participation of a diversity of community members is a key intermediary outcome in this results pathway, so that communities meaningfully participate in the analysis, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian initiatives.

The outputs' participation opportunities, improved service offerings and collective ownership serve to ensure that people's needs and concerns inform services and aid mechanisms through transparent processes. Engagement, feedback and accountability mechanisms at community level encourage

transparency and improve relations between affected populations and authorities. Community recognition of issues and understanding of the power of collective action enable them to address shared problems and concerns effectively.

Enabling conditions for this results pathway include:

- Humanitarian actors/service providers and community members value and use mechanisms for engagement and co-design.
- Mechanisms for sharing and receiving information are established and functional, using trusted communication channels.
- Local leaders, institutions and service providers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.



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Community Engagement for AAP and for SBC:

A Vision Paper on the Role of Community Engagement to Attaining Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) in Humanitarian Outcomes

