

Field Visit Summary: Sierra Leone Red Cross

Background

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) runs a worldwide programme called Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change, involving 37 countries, that aims to mobilise community respect for diversity and action against racism and other forms of exclusion. As part of this programme, the Sierra Leone Red Cross (SLRC) has established an agricultural project for vulnerable youth, organized into four intentionally diverse groups of 30. Youth live and work together on agricultural sites and participate in workshops relating to diversity, intercultural dialogue, gender, and building a culture of peace.



Aims of the Field Visit

The main aim of the field visit to SLRC was to test a total of 16 indicators selected with reference to the IFRC list of Fundamental Principles, relating to the values of Empowerment, Integrity, Unity in Diversity, Trust and Justice. These included four head indicators and 12 sub-indicators. A further objective was to identify assessment tools that could be usefully applied to measure these indicators in a context where many participants are non-literate.

Main Findings

All of the draft indicators that were tested during this field visit were accepted as relevant and important to the SLRC team. Some of them were phrased as double or multiple questions and had to be split into two or more parts, while others needed minor rewording, but the team was satisfied that in their revised forms the indicators were measurable. The 16 indicators were also rated highly with regard to usability, and described as valid for measuring the respective values.

This field visit highlights the fact that more work is needed to create and refine suitable assessment tools for non-literate contexts, and to provide CSOs with guidelines on implementing them, especially with regard to language and gender issues and the physical environment.

The values assessment relating to the young people's experiences of discrimination provided important information to the SLRC project staff about the positive impact of their program, as well as highlighting areas where more work is needed.

Processes Utilized

The process of selecting indicators and assessment tools consisted of two steps. In the first step, before the field visit, RC representatives selected their preferred values and indicators from the list. In Sierra Leone, researchers from the two participating universities worked together with the SLRC National Youth Programme Coordinator and a consultant from the IFRC Principles and Values Department, to identify suitable assessment tools for the preferred indicators and determine what should be measured, according to the context.

Assessment Tools

Assessment Tool Used	Indicators Tested
Spatial and corporal surveys	E_SH1b, J_H1, J_SH1c
Secret vote survey	E_H5, I_SH1l, U_H2, U_SH2c, U_SH2d, U_SH2f, T_H4, J_H1, J_SH1c
Focus groups (discussion and theatre)	All of the above, plus T_SH2b
Group goal setting	E_SH4a, I_SH1m, J_SH2a
Structured non-participative observation	E_SH4a, E_H5, I_SH1l, U_H2(1), U_SH2c, U_SH2d, T_H4, T_SH2a, J_H1, J_SH1c, J_SH2a, J_SH2b
Unstructured participative observation	E_SH4a, U_H2(2), U_SH2c & d, T_SH2b, J_SH1c, J_SH2a

(a) Spatial and corporal surveys: The spatial survey method was applied by asking participants to step to the left to answer 'Never', stay in their place to answer 'Sometimes', or step to the right to answer 'All the time'. In the corporal survey, participants stood still for 'Yes' or crouched for 'No'.

(b) Secret vote survey: For sensitive questions, such as those relating to discrimination in the team, the spatial/corporal survey method was recognized as unsuitable. Participants were given three ballots with spots of different colours, each representing a different answer, and were asked to put their vote into a plastic bag and throw out the unused ballots.

(c) Focus groups: These were used to complement the spatial/corporal survey. In the theatre group, participants were asked to role-play examples of discriminatory and non-discriminatory situations, and how the former can be changed. The other group conducted a conventional discussion.

(d) Goal setting: Participants, in their usual teams, were offered the opportunity to choose two goals that they would like to achieve in the coming month, with the facilitator providing examples. The CSO plans to use follow-up analysis of goal achievement to assess specific indicators relating to practical aspects of empowerment, integrity and justice.

(e) Structured non-participative observation: Observers used a structured assessment sheet to monitor the number of active vs. passive group members, and the role of group leaders, in discussions during RC exercises and in team decision-making processes during the goal setting exercise.

(f) General unstructured participative observation: An expert group consisting of researchers and RC representatives observed the workshop in which they were participating, and youth work in the groups, from the value-based indicators perspective. Findings were summarised in a debriefing.

Other Lessons Learned

Abstract questions: One exercise was unsuccessful because the question was phrased in an abstract way and was not fully understood. This could be overcome by keeping questions specific, and field-testing them with a small number of participants before surveying the whole group.

Group conformity: Spatial/corporal surveys are highly vulnerable to group conformity bias, as participants are often reluctant to stand out visibly from the crowd and face its attention. This could be addressed by using the secret vote method instead.

Physical comfort: The spatial survey was performed outdoors in the hot sun. The team noted that participants felt uncomfortable, and quickly became bored. The positive aspect of applied methods was the ability to identify weak points by observation, and thus assess the quality of gained data.

Gender: Women participated more fully in focus groups when separated from men, but the women's group was less effective, due to inadequate translation by the female interpreter and unavailability of a female video camera operator. For gender-sensitive questions, it is essential to identify a skilled team of female researchers in advance, or ideally to translate assessment tools and conduct discussions in a local language understood by the whole group.