

Slovak Red Cross

**Assessment-Driven
Transformation:** A Practical
Look at the SRC's Journey



This case study takes you inside each assessment, uncovering key insights, challenges, and learnings for the National Societies. It concludes with how the Slovak Red Cross is strategically advancing, turning a demanding journey into a bold path for growth. The journey begins with strong leadership and a committed staff and volunteers of the Slovak Red Cross, who played a vital role in these assessments.

Acknowledgements

This case study, detailing the Slovak Red Cross's transformative journey through a series of organizational and market assessments, would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions, insights, and support from numerous individuals. We are deeply grateful to all those who dedicated their time and expertise to this process. Their collective efforts and dedication have significantly contributed to providing the Slovak Red Cross with a clearer understanding of its strengths, challenges, and a roadmap for future strategic development.

Slovak Red Cross

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Abbreviations

CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability	OCAC	Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	PER	Preparedness for Effective Response
DRM	Disaster Risk Management	PNS	Partner National Society
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	PoA	Plan of Action
ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross	RC	Red Cross
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	ROE	Regional office for Europe and Central Asia
NSD	National Society Development	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
		SRC	Slovak Red Cross

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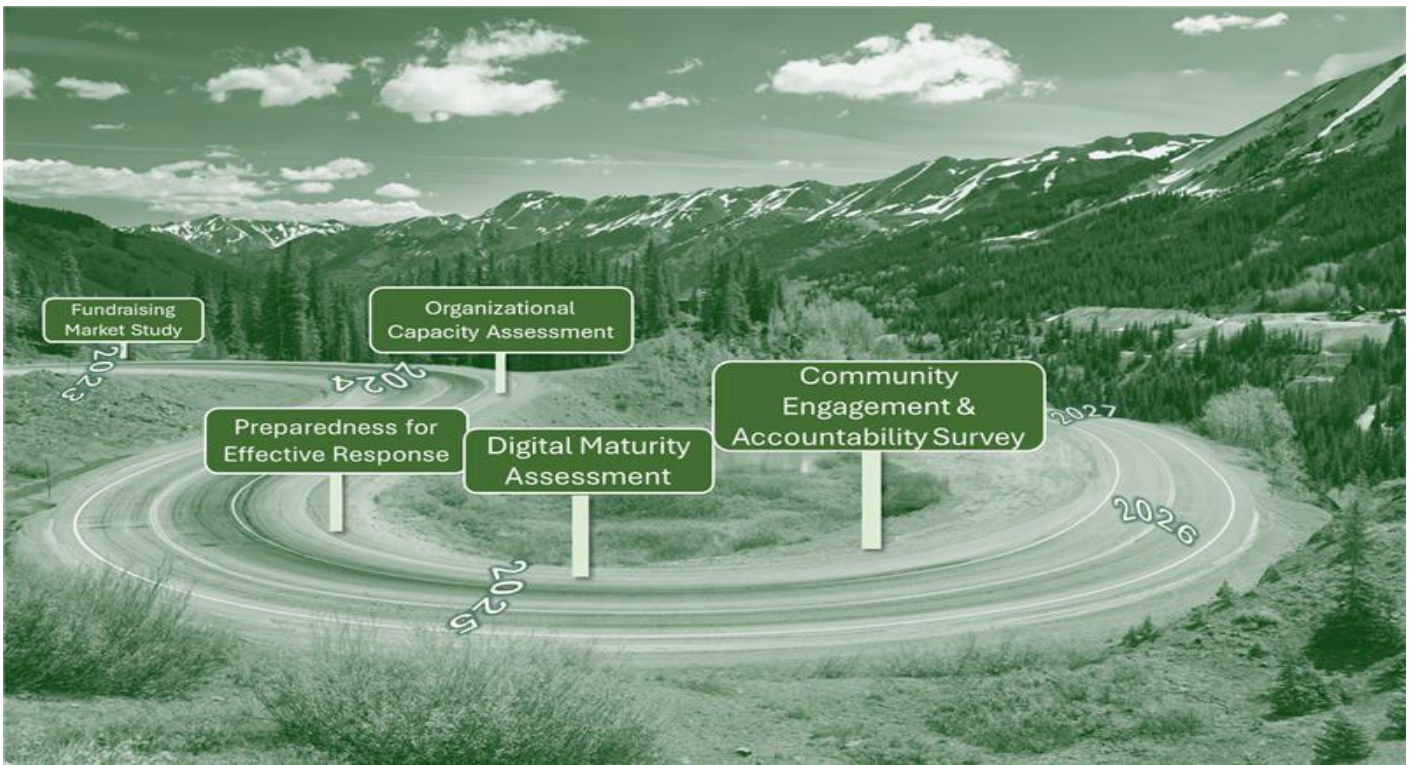
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Introduction: A New Chapter in Organizational Transformation

Following the onset of the Ukraine and Impacted Countries Crises Emergency Appeal, the [Slovak Red Cross](#) (SRC) significantly intensified its humanitarian support, operating jointly with the IFRC under an Emergency Appeal. For the SRC, the period between 2023 and 2025 represents more than a phase of program implementation. This case study is defined by bold self-examination, candid reflection, and a commitment to evidence-based transformation. Through a coordinated journey of organizational assessments, the SRC took decisive steps toward building a National Society that can lead locally, partner globally, and serve people with greater agility and impact.

This case study explores the meaning and impact of these assessments for the Slovak Red Cross—why they were undertaken, what they revealed, and how they are actively shaping the organization's trajectory.

1. Why the Assessments? Why Now?

Before the Ukraine crisis, the SRC's development efforts were largely domestic and operational in scope, focused on first aid, promoting blood donation, providing social services, increasing volunteer engagement, and pursuing limited fundraising initiatives. Broader efforts to strengthen the National Society were constrained.

The Ukrainian crisis disrupted this rhythm, exposing deeper structural gaps and long-standing, unaddressed needs. The urgency of humanitarian response sparked an awakening: to continue serving effectively, the organization itself had to become stronger. It also highlighted the need to invest in the long-term resilience of the National Society and its services, well beyond the end of the Emergency Appeal funding.

This was not just about compliance or ticking boxes. These assessments offered something different: a chance to validate internal reflections, surface hidden challenges, and chart a strategic and shared way forward. As Secretary General Zuzana Rosiarová stated, "These assessments gave us a shared direction. They taught us to move forward—purposefully."

2. The Power of Collective Reflection

During the period from 2023 to early 2025, while responding to humanitarian needs under the ongoing operation, the SRC undertook several critical internal and external assessments. These included a Fundraising Market Study, Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC), Preparedness for Effective Response (PER), Digital Maturity Assessment, as well as a Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) baseline survey. Each assessment offered a distinct lens. In the following section, you will find an overview of each

assessment and its relevance to the Slovak Red Cross's ongoing transformation.

2.1 Fundraising Market Study, an external assessment



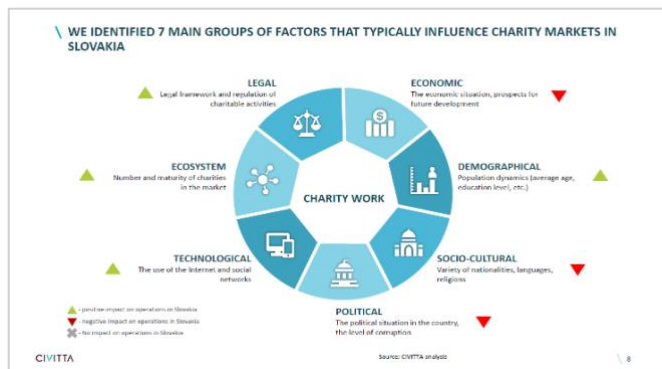
Launched in June 2023, the Fundraising Market Study had a clear primary goal: to provide the SRC with a comprehensive understanding of its fundraising potential. This included exploring how much fundraising income the SRC could potentially generate in Slovakia, examining both the opportunities and challenges in the local market, assessing its social media presence, and analyzing how NGOs communicate and manage donations. The study also looked closely at the SRC's existing fundraising capacities and strategies—both the headquarters and local branch levels—with the aim of generating concrete ideas to strengthen income generation. The key findings from the study were planned to be used to help develop the SRC's long-term resource mobilization strategy for getting resources. This was the first assessment experience the SRC had undertaken in this capacity-building journey.

Where It All Began

The decision to conduct this Market Study, supported by external consultants, was remarkably simple and swift. As Secretary General Zuzana Rosiarová reflected, they "didn't have any kind of market study before," and the chance to gain even basic insights into the fundraising landscape was valuable. It offered an opportunity, as she described, "to see things in a different way and to see the results". For an organization stepping into a new phase of strategic development, the reaction was clear: "Let's go for it, because we have never faced this kind of assessment." The study reinforced existing awareness of both capacity gaps and strengths, serving as a meaningful stepping stone toward positive change. It also aimed to better understand the people behind giving, recognizing that the greatest potential lies in building trust and inspiring compassion through human connection.

Behind the Data

The methodology employed was well-structured and multi-faceted, combining desk research with qualitative and quantitative data collection. The desk research component involved analyzing official statistics and profiles of relevant NGOs operating in Slovakia. In parallel, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with SRC representatives, other NGOs, and corporate donors, with a focus on companies demonstrating strong commitments to CSR. However, some key NGOs did not respond. According to the Market Study report by CIVITTA (the consulting firm), a significant component of the research was an online survey involving 1000 respondents aged 18 to 64. The sample was carefully structured to reflect the demographic composition of the Slovak population in terms of age, gender, education level, occupation, and income. The data collection for the survey took place from April 18 to 21, 2023.



From Data to Direction

The Market Study delivered helpful insights that validated many of the SRC's assumptions, offering concrete evidence to support strategic decision-making and build stakeholder confidence. It presented a detailed picture of the Slovak charity market, estimating the total annual volume of donations at 308.3 million EUR. The study analyzed various funding streams and confirmed several key patterns. Key finding was that the largest charitable campaigns engaging a broad base of individual donors represent the second-largest sector of the Slovak donation market, an important insight for shaping the SRC's long-term fundraising strategy.

Strategic Insights and Challenges in Fundraising

The Market Study confirmed the urgent need for a strategic shift within the SRC, particularly around individual giving. It revealed promising opportunities rooted in strong public trust and widespread brand recognition. However, it also highlighted several persistent challenges that must be addressed to fully unlock this potential. Key issues identified include:

- **Fundraising vision:** A limited strategic framework and a lack of supportive culture to drive long-term, sustainable fundraising efforts.

- **Support Systems:** Insufficient infrastructure and systems to effectively support fundraising activities.
- **Resource Allocation:** Limited human and financial resources are dedicated to developing domestic fundraising.
- **Branch Engagement:** Ongoing difficulties in engaging local branches in fundraising initiatives.
- **Social Media Utilization:** A need to enhance and manage the SRC's social media presence and content to increase donations and reinforce the image of the Slovak RC.

These insights form a critical foundation for shaping SRC's future fundraising strategy.

Steps Already Taken

To address these challenges, SRC has taken several strategic steps:

- **Human Resources:** Appointed a full-time fundraiser to build robust fundraising systems and provide direct support to branch-level initiatives.
- **Technical Infrastructure:** Introduced necessary tools like CRM to streamline fundraising processes.
- **Campaigns:** Launched several successful fundraising campaigns, such as Tax Assignations Campaigns, the Christmas Campaign, and the Inclusion Cafe Campaign, to serve as practical examples for branches looking to initiate community-level fundraising. Campaign Successes include:
 - **Christmas Campaign:** Raised €4,500 from 274 donors, with an average gift of €16.
 - **Inclusion Cafe Campaign:** Raised €6,200 from 292 donors, with an average gift of €20.
- **Social Media Enhancement:** Improved social media content quality and presence, achieving significant growth in followers, compared to other Slovak NGOs on Facebook and Instagram.

What helped SRC boost its fundraising?

"The market study confirmed SRC's strong potential to grow income through structured fundraising. With our trusted reputation and public support, we saw clear interest from both individuals and companies. Strengthening our brand and donor engagement helped us secure over 4 million euros through grants and proposals, sustaining key programs and boosting our capacity."



Martina Machánková
Fundraising Specialist
Slovak Red Cross

Conclusion

The Market Study conducted by the SRC has provided valuable insights and confirmed the need for strategic changes, though it did not fully align with the SRC's expectations. With a strong social media presence and successful campaigns, the SRC is well-positioned to expand its fundraising efforts. With a clear, forward-looking strategy and dedicated staff for priority programs, the fundraising strategy can be finalized to secure resources for program implementation. Addressing current gaps—specifically in allocating resources to support targeted fundraising streams and enhancing branch-level engagement—will be critical to long-term success. Ultimately, the Market Study, along with assessments like PER and OCAC, serves as a valuable foundation for evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement in both fundraising and the SRC's broader strategic development.

2.2 Strengthening National Society through Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC)



Before the Ukraine Crisis, the SRC had limited efforts toward strengthening its National Society to better serve communities in need. Their focus was on local activities, increasing volunteer engagement, and securing diverse funding sources. However, during the Ukraine Crisis, the SRC's capacity was challenged, revealing the urgent need for organizational transformation and long-term resilience. This period marked a turning point for transformations, requiring an understanding of the meaning behind internal assessments and using those insights to drive strategic change. The SRC went for its first organizational assessment using [OCAC](#) tool.

Decision to conduct OCAC

The OCAC is a holistic self-assessment process undertaken by a National Society to capture the strengths and capacity gaps across a wide range of organizational functions.

The SRC had considered conducting an OCAC for many years, but the timing only felt right in February 2024. This moment was made possible by strengthened collaboration with the IFRC colleagues and a growing internal understanding of the process and its potential benefits. Shared experiences with similar National Societies further reinforced the SRC's

readiness to engage. The SRC felt the decision to proceed was both timely and realistic. While already aware of the organization's existing strengths and capacity gaps, they were particularly interested in understanding how to prepare effectively for the assessment and how the OCAC could provide external validation. Most importantly, the leadership sought a structured, evidence-based tool to help identify actionable priorities and guide future development in a systematic way.

Perspective on the Process and Results

This OCAC self-assessment brought together 16 committed participants from headquarters and branches, all eager to make a difference. The process was facilitated by two trained OCAC facilitators from the Polish RC and the Kyrgyzstan RC. The leadership of the SRC described OCAC as a "very holistic assessment" that covered "every area of questioning" and provided a "general picture" of the organization's standing.

As a part of the pre-work for the OCAC, the SRC analyzed their context on following four areas, more detailed update available with the SRC.

Vulnerability and Foresight: The assessment highlighted personnel shortages, aging volunteers, and external vulnerabilities like poverty and migration.

RC Identity and Good Governance: There was a varied understanding of organizational structure and a need for better training of directors and elected members.

Financial Situation and Financial Management: The SRC had a fragile financial situation with a need for better planning, resource mobilization, and financial management support.

Framework for Action: The organization lacked written policies and strategic plans, requiring improved operational planning and innovation systems.

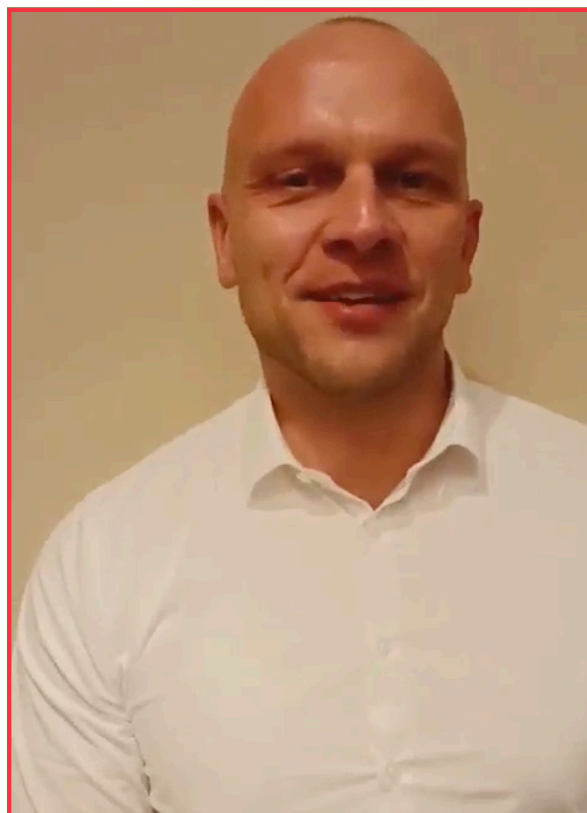
Addressing these challenges is crucial for building a stronger, more resilient organization.

This reflected a deep trust in both the process and the facilitators, which was seen by the Secretary-General as a tool developed by "smart people" with a proven track record. The assessment process itself was considered a valuable learning experience, with the SRC team gaining insight into "how to do assessments" and "how to cooperate within the group." Importantly, the process fostered a safe, open environment where participants could "speak freely, openly and without any limitations." The SRC's Head of International Cooperation played a key role not only in initiating the OCAC but also in ensuring the team understood how the process worked and what would follow the assessment. The National Society also embraced a new IFRC-introduced methodology that included a pre-assessment analysis across four organizational areas, an approach that required additional preparation and openness to innovation.

Testimonies during the SRC's OCAC workshop



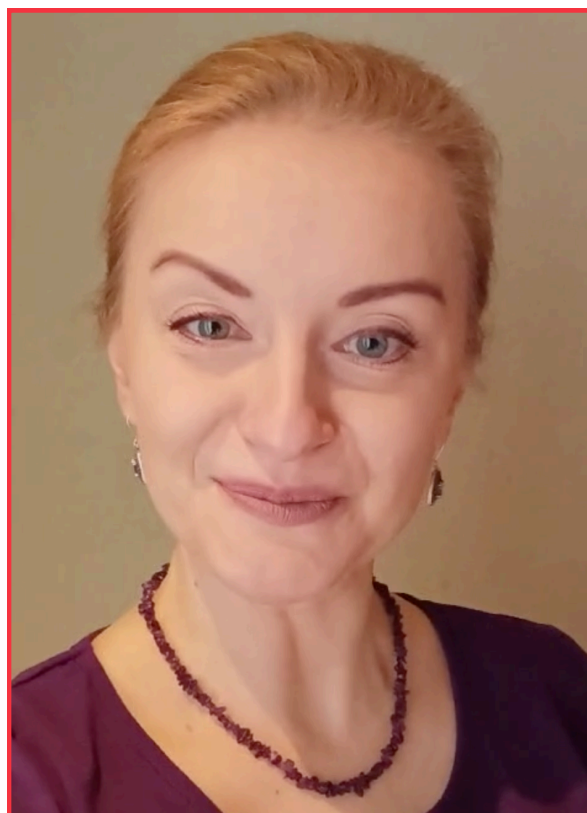
Zuzana Rosiarová,
Secretary-General, Slovak Red Cross



Radoslav Vergrin,
Vice President, SRC



Denisa Kučkovská,
Director of the SRC Regional Branch Poprad



Magdalena Stefańska,
OCAC Facilitator, Polish RC

Why Did the Slovak RC conduct OCAC?

“For the past decade, the Slovak RC had been contemplating the OCAC exercise, recognizing its potential to drive meaningful organizational development. The timing finally felt right as we grew closer to our IFRC colleagues, gaining a deeper understanding of the process and its benefits. This close collaboration and shared experiences with similar National Societies, like Polish RC, and Magda (OCAC facilitator), alongside us made the whole journey feel more connected and encouraging—it really helped us see we are not doing this alone.”



Silvia Kostelná,
Head International Cooperation
Slovak Red Cross

The OCAC process identified critical areas needing improvement, including the absence of a clear **strategic plan**, **financial sustainability challenges**, **addressing staff and volunteer management**, **accountability to stakeholders**, and **developing better support systems**, as well as an **institutional framework**. These findings validated the existing understanding of where improvements were needed. The organization also struggled with staff shortages and needed a better system to manage volunteers. Enhancing communication with stakeholders was essential to build trust and transparency. Additionally, developing better support systems for security, ICT, and logistics was crucial for efficient operations.

Actions Taken

Following the valuable insights gained from the OCAC, the SRC has initiated several key actions. These include a series of several consultation sessions with branches aimed at defining clear priorities for the development of the upcoming SRC strategic plan. Additionally, a strategy for financial sustainability has been launched, focused on diversifying income sources. To address human capacity challenges, the SRC plans to expand its HR capacity and has implemented a system to improve volunteer recruitment and retention. Efforts have also been made to strengthen communication channels with stakeholders and enhance support systems in critical areas like security, ICT, and logistics. An initial Plan of Action (PoA), serving as the NSD plan, has been developed based on outcomes to track the progress.

Success factors for implementing OCAC for the NS

According to the SRC, the OCAC assessment brought together a dedicated, smaller group of passionate colleagues, fostering deeper engagement and personal connections. Three working groups were established—focusing on strategic framework, financial sustainability, and HR sustainability—laying the groundwork for future development. This strong foundation set the organization for success by encouraging enthusiastic participation and face-to-face meetings, which created a sense of ownership and commitment. The goal of

increasing colleague involvement ensures alignment and strengthens the Slovak RC.

Conclusion

Finally, the Organizational Capacity Assessment gave the Slovak RC a clear, evidence-based starting point for action. This holistic assessment proved invaluable in strengthening the National Society's capacity, providing crucial external validation and a written basis of the SRC's strengths and key areas for improvement. It turned existing gaps into shared priorities and set the stage for next steps, like strategic planning, HR, finance reforms, and areas of National Society Development, as well as stronger branch engagement. More than a one-time exercise, the OCAC now shapes how the SRC plans, learns, and grows—anchored in its mission and built for impact. However, the journey ahead required continuous effort, sustained investment, and the determination to overcome multiple challenges.

2.3 Dedication and Resilience through Preparedness for Effective Response (PER)



Over the past three years, the Slovak RC has faced numerous challenges, from natural disasters to the significant humanitarian impact of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. These events underscored the critical importance of preparedness and tested the resilience of the organization. In response, the SRC embarked on a transformative journey to enhance its preparedness and response capabilities. In June 2024, with the support of the IFRC and the Belgian Red Cross, 28 dedicated participants from headquarters and branches came together for a comprehensive self-assessment workshop on PER. This initiative marked a significant step in the ongoing efforts of the SRC to become a more resilient and responsive organization.

How did it start?

The [PER](#) assessment was conducted in June 2024, following an orientation in May 2024, with the support of the IFRC and the Belgian Red Cross. The decision to undertake the PER assessment was driven by the recognition that strengthening disaster preparedness was "something new for us" and an area that needed improvement. The PER tool was known to be "on the table," so it became a matter of determining the

right time and a facilitator. Another aspect that influenced the decision to proceed with the PER assessment was the lean toward “trying to do something new.”

Challenges

The Slovak RC faced several significant challenges:

- **Absence of a Documented DRM Strategy:** Without a formal Disaster Risk Management (DRM) strategy, the organization relied heavily on operational experience, which lacked standardized procedures and common indicators.
- **Lack of Specific Emergency Response Procedures:** The absence of documented emergency response procedures and a formal business continuity plan hindered seamless operations during crises.
- **External Threats:** Natural disasters and population movements posed ongoing threats to their operations, while limited resources and coordination issues with authorities, local responders, and UN/NGO agencies further complicated their response efforts.

Another key challenge was the need to significantly improve contingency planning, coordination, and data management. Recommendations focused on strengthening legal advocacy, formalizing procedures, enhancing training, and building partnerships to boost overall preparedness and response capacity.

Actions Planned

The SRC developed the following key targets to address these challenges, albeit implementation is on hold due to the lack of DM staff:

- **Developing a Comprehensive DRM Strategy:** They focused on creating a documented DRM strategy with clear procedures and common indicators to guide their response efforts.
- **Establishing SOPs and Mapping Capacities:** The organization worked on establishing and disseminating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and mapping the capacities of branches and the National Society.
- **Enhancing Data Collection and Management:** They implemented unified approaches to needs assessment and data collection, improving data management and visualization.
- **Strengthening Coordination and Training:** Regular drills and training sessions were conducted to strengthen coordination with local, national, and international authorities. They also focused on optimizing logistics, procurement, and supply chain management.

- **Building Strong Partnerships:** The SRC excelled in building strong partnerships and coordinating with various ministries, actively participating in crisis management boards to ensure a unified response.

Results Expected

The outcomes of these efforts were significant, and the results aimed for the future:

- **Improved Preparedness and Response Capabilities:** The development of a comprehensive DRM strategy and the establishment of SOPs enhanced the organization's ability to respond effectively to crises.
- **Stronger Community Support:** Their robust finance and administration policies, comprehensive first aid training, and effective family links restoration procedures highlighted their commitment to community support.
- **Enhanced Coordination:** The SRC's active participation in crisis management boards and strong partnerships with various ministries ensured a more coordinated and effective response during emergencies.

How did Slovak RC perceive the value of PER assessment in enhancing its crisis preparedness?

“Before conducting the PER assessment, I perceived crises primarily as situations where the Slovak Red Cross would respond within the scope of our existing capacities. However, PER helped us clearly understand the importance of systematic preparedness. We realized that it’s not enough to simply react — crises require proactive planning, budgeting, and the development of a strategy for providing assistance. This ensures that our support is as effective and relevant as possible, not only for the affected population but also for our partners, such as emergency services and local authorities.”



Andrej Barborka,
Director of the Topolcany branch
Slovak Red Cross

Conclusion

The journey of the Slovak RC is a testament to their dedication and resilience. Despite facing significant challenges, they have made remarkable strides in enhancing their preparedness and response capabilities. Looking ahead, the SRC sees promising opportunities to further strengthen community-based disaster preparedness and risk reduction. By gradually developing comprehensive training programs and forging partnerships with private sector suppliers, they aim to secure vital resources and support, empowering communities to be more resilient. A big ongoing challenge for the SRC is recruiting a relevant DM person who can drive the preparedness agenda. Their story is not just about

overcoming challenges; it's about building a brighter future for the communities they serve.

2.4 Innovation through Digital Maturity Assessment

In January 2025, the Slovak RC embarked on a transformative journey towards digital maturity. This journey began with a comprehensive self-assessment, including a survey, ten interviews, and a four-day workshop facilitated by the IFRC and the Netherlands Red Cross. The assessment was based on the first step of the [IFRC Digital Maturity Framework](#), focusing on three pillars: people, process, and technology.

The Assessment Process

The assessment provided valuable insights, revealing both strengths and gaps in the SRC's digital transformation efforts. The organization benefited from strong leadership support, in-house expertise in data management and IT, and the use of digital tools like EspoCRM, PowerBI, and SharePoint. Collaborations with organizations such as the IFRC, Spanish RC, and Netherlands RC also drove progress in digital initiatives and training.



However, the assessment also highlighted significant challenges. These included limited budget and resources, fragmented data across different platforms, varying levels of digital literacy among staff and volunteers (with some reliance on manual, paper-based methods), and the difficulty in engaging branches fully to ensure data quality and relevance. These challenges resonate with broader organizational issues identified through other assessments, such as the need for financial sustainability and addressing personnel capacity.

Roadmap and Implementation

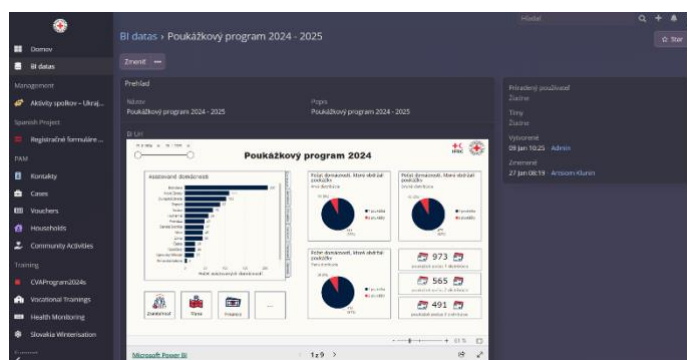
To address the identified gaps, the assessment recommended several focus areas for the SRC's digital transformation roadmap. Prioritizing the strengthening of the Digital Transformation team, establishing governance and strategy, and securing funding and resources were deemed essential. Other key areas included implementing a centralized data management system, standardizing data collection and quality assurance, automating processes, enhancing security, and strengthening data and digital

literacy. Effective change management and the evaluation, scaling, and sustainability of the transformation were also crucial.

The results from the digital assessment, like those from PER and OCAC, are now guiding the SRC's strategic planning and future development, offering a clear roadmap. The SRC aims to set targets for areas like digitization within its strategic planning process. The journey is recognized as a long-term effort, one that cannot be achieved within a single year.

Measuring Success

Success will be measured through indicators such as CRM adoption by branches. The SRC is already implementing its CRM system and migrating old programs from paper to digital. Systematic training through online workshops helps branches use new features and save time. Local programs are being digitalized, and tools like Kobo Toolbox are introduced for offline use. Continuous monitoring ensures effective usage and efficiency across all branches.



One notable development is the introduction of a new Volunteer Management System (VMS), designed to replace the previous paper-based process with a more efficient digital solution. While the system is now in place, full implementation across all branches is still underway. To support this transition, the SRC has hired a dedicated staff member to assist branches in adopting and using the new system effectively. Additionally, the SRC has begun managing its own data system, marking a step forward in strengthening locally led humanitarian efforts.

How Will Digital Transformation Benefit the SRC?

"Successful digital transformation will not only reduce our administrative burden but also enhance our ability to support program-related documentation that currently lacks automation. By centralizing and digitalizing our data, we can perform better analysis, leading to more effective and evidence-based programming. This will elevate the quality of our information support, ultimately making our initiatives more impactful and efficient."



Artsiom Klunin,
Information Management Officer
Slovak Red Cross

Role of Stakeholders

Joint support from the IFRC and the Netherlands RC has been vital to this process. The Netherlands RC's support has been instrumental in preparing and transitioning to the new system, providing troubleshooting, technical support, and resolving queries. Cooperation with IFRC's joint initiative, under the supervision of the IFRC IM department, has also been vital. They have provided guidance on funding and helped streamline data collection to align with the IFRC standards. The Slovak RC successfully transitioned to independently managing its own data system, enhancing its capacity for locally led humanitarian action.

[Here you can read the story published by the Netherlands RC on Where Are They Now? How the Slovak RC Took Control of Their Data - 510](#), dated 22nd April 2025.

Challenges and Risks

The Slovak RC anticipates two main challenges in implementing the digital transformation roadmap: securing adequate funding for software, licenses, and human resources, and engaging external consultants to ensure they have the same level of commitment as internal staff (including branches), while addressing the competitive salaries offered by the private sector. These efforts require dedicated funding, and the Slovak RC is seeking support from the Movement partners to help drive its digital transformation between 2025 and 2027. The SRC plans to introduce more platforms and tools over the next three years, expecting an increase in users and associated costs.

Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

The digital transformation journey is seen as a fundamental part of a broader assessment journey aimed at strengthening the National Society. The outcomes from various assessments are being combined and compiled to contribute collectively to this goal. The branches are increasingly engaged and aware that they are part of something bigger, gaining a clearer understanding of the international context and the importance of seizing the momentum generated by these processes. The assessment results are accessible through SRC's intranet.

The Slovak RC's journey towards digital transformation showcases their commitment to innovation and resilience. By addressing challenges and implementing strategic actions guided by the assessment, the SRC is making significant improvements. The journey of innovation, resilience, and dedication to improving humanitarian services through digital advancements is ongoing. As the SRC is poised to become a more efficient, agile, and innovative organization, it is also committed to making a positive difference and integrating these strategic goals with the core humanitarian values and human touch of the Red Cross.

2.5 Strengthening Community Connection through Engagement and Accountability Baseline Survey



As part of a series of comprehensive assessments undertaken between 2023 and early 2025, described as a "journey of assessments as a new starting point for the transformations," the SRC decided to delve deeper into how it connects with the communities it serves. The SRC's experience with the CEA baseline survey marked another important step in its organizational development. The survey not only assessed how the SRC listens to, communicates with, and involves communities in its work, but also helped to identify practical ways to strengthen accountability and trust. It provided a valuable snapshot of current practices and perceptions, offering both quantitative and qualitative insights. The findings are now being compiled and analyzed alongside other key assessments—such as the OCAC & PER—to inform a comprehensive, collective approach to strengthening the National Society's systems, culture, and impact.

The CEA baseline survey Process

The SRC undertook the [CEA](#) baseline survey as part of its participation in the CEA Ambassador Program. This involved a baseline survey conducted on three levels of the National Society: with program colleagues at the Headquarters (HQ) level, leadership, and branches. The baseline process involved surveys and interviews.

The data gathered from these surveys was handed over to IFRC colleagues for an in-depth analysis. Once the analysis is finalized, the SRC will work closely with assigned mentors to develop recommendations tailored specifically for the National Society. This initiative is supported by the IFRC and involves seeking technical support from IFRC mentors as part of the CEA Ambassador program. The SRC is also actively

discussing adapting digital tools for feedback mechanisms with the 510 team of the Netherlands Red Cross.

Why CEA is Important for the SRC

For the Slovak RC, the CEA is considered essential. It ensures that their work is guided by the voices, needs, and feedback of the communities they serve. Integrating the CEA reinforces the principles of accountability, trust, and inclusion, which are central to their humanitarian mission.

The baseline process itself provided valuable initial insights into the SRC's CEA capacities and practices across different organizational levels. These findings will be used to identify potential improvements of internal systems, processes, and leadership engagement.

Integrating CEA into the Plan of Action

Aligning with the approach of combining recommendations from different assessments mentioned in the broader transformation narrative, the SRC has already developed an initial PoA based on outcomes from the PER and OCAC assessments. This initial plan outlines priority actions related to strengthening accountability, participation, two-way communication with communities, and overall institutionalization within the National Society.

Once the CEA baseline analysis is completed, the SRC intends to adjust and enrich the PoA to reflect the newly identified gaps and recommendations. This process is expected to create a more targeted and realistic approach to institutionalizing CEA within the SRC. This demonstrates how the CEA baseline survey is seen as a significant contribution to the collective effort to strengthen the National Society's capacities, alongside other assessments.

Expected Changes and Benefits

By integrating the CEA, the SRC expects to see several positive changes. These include stronger community engagement, improved quality and relevance of their services, and greater trust in the SRC as a responsive and transparent organization. Furthermore, the CEA is expected to empower communities to be active participants in their own recovery and preparedness, which is seen as especially critical in building long-term resilience.

"CEA became increasingly important for the SRC as we recognized, through our own experience, that meaningful, two-way communication with communities significantly improved the relevance and impact of our work. As we shifted from a more top-down approach to actively listening and involving people in designing and reshaping our services and interventions, we saw stronger trust, greater participation, and better outcomes across our programs. The baseline survey brought added value by providing a clear picture of community needs, perceptions, and communication gaps from the start, enabling us to design more targeted and responsive interventions that truly reflect the voices of those we serve. The baseline assessment was a crucial step in evaluating how deeply CEA is embedded within our organization, helping us identify where we stand and what needs to be strengthened—because truly effective humanitarian work depends on embedding community participation and feedback into every level of our operations."



Gabriela Šujanská
CEA & Volunteering Focal Point
Slovak Red Cross

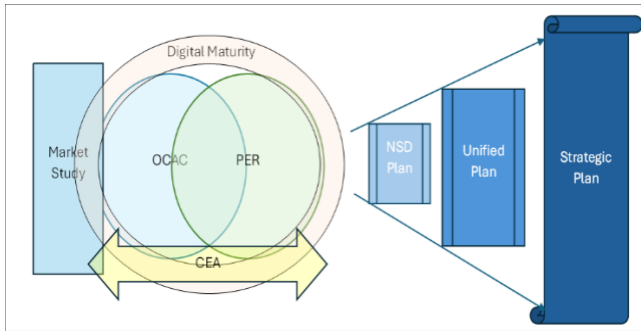
Challenges and Risks Ahead

Implementing the recommendations from the CEA survey, particularly institutionalizing CEA across the organization, is anticipated to face certain challenges. These include ensuring adequate human resources capacity for implementation, maintaining consistent engagement from leadership at branches level, and embedding the CEA approaches across all sectors instead of treating it as a standalone component. The SRC sees capacity strengthening and regional branch management buy-in as key to addressing these risks.

Conclusion

The CEA survey represents a key step toward institutionalizing CEA across the Slovak RC, ensuring it becomes a core, sustainable element of how the organization operates. This includes systematically integrating CEA into policies, training frameworks, and program cycle management. The results from this survey, like those from PER and OCAC, will contribute to guiding the SRC's strategic planning and future development. The SRC's engagement with CEA reflects its commitment to being guided by the needs and feedback of the communities it serves, reinforcing trust and inclusion as central to its mission.

3. From Validation to Vision: How Assessments Shape the Slovak RC's Path Forward



Drawing on the sources and our conversation history, the suite of assessments undertaken by the Slovak RC, including the Fundraising Market Study, PER, OCAC, Digital Maturity, and CEA survey, is viewed by the organization primarily as a **confirmation of what was already understood naturally**. However, having these findings presented on a **"written basis" was highly valued**.

The assessments have provided **crucial external confirmation and validation** of the SRC's existing strengths and capacity gaps. From the perspective of SRC leadership, there was a genuine sense of reassurance—and even a bit of relief—in seeing their internal perceptions confirmed by objective findings. In fact, some results suggested that the organization might be performing better than they had given themselves credit for. Having an external perspective really mattered; it offered a chance to step back, look at things differently, and truly see the results. It was a reminder of how important reflection and evidence-based learning are in shaping meaningful progress.

3.1 What these Assessments Meant for the SRC

- **Validation, not judgment:** The SRC was already aware of its weaknesses, but the assessments provided written confirmation, bringing credibility, clarity, and focus to the organization's development efforts.
- **A shift in mindset:** This process cultivated openness: teams spoke freely, silos broke down, and there was trust in the tools, the process, and each other.
- **Strategic alignment:** The assessments did more than highlight problems; they helped the SRC organize its priorities. For the first time, the organization has an NSD plan for all its institutional developments, aligned with its Unified Plan.
- **Enhanced Internal Cooperation and Openness:** The OCAC process, for example, brought together a dedicated group from headquarters and branches, fostering deeper discussions and personal connections. It created an environment where participants could

"speak freely, openly and without any limitations," and "honestly say what they think."

Leading with Purpose: Learning, Aligning, and Moving Forward

"You know, going through all these assessments, OCAC, PER, the digital maturity check, and the market study, has really helped us grow. They didn't tell us anything shocking, but they confirmed what we already felt and helped us see more clearly where we can do better. Most importantly, they gave us a shared direction. For me as a leader, these assessments aren't just about ticking boxes. They're about getting everyone on the same page, thinking together, and moving forward with purpose. It's not about reacting to every single result but about learning from each one. We've also learned some important lessons: don't overload ourselves, it's okay to say no, and being present—really present—matters. These assessments are not just evaluations; they're opportunities to grow stronger as a team and as an organization. Now, our job is to take what we've learned and build it into our strategy—step by step, at a pace that makes sense, and in a way that lasts."



Zuzana Rosiarová
Secretary General
Slovak Red Cross

- **Increased Engagement and Awareness:** An increasing number of branches are becoming more engaged and aware of being part of something larger, with a growing understanding of the international context.
- **Learning Experience:** The Secretary General noted that the assessments taught the team "how to do assessments" and "how to cooperate within the group." From digital systems to volunteer management, the SRC began treating change as a continuous journey, not a one-off project.

3.2 Overall Challenges and Lessons Learned from these assessments

While the assessments are seen as beneficial, undertaking them was described as a **"burden," primarily "from the point of time"** due to workload. Doing "too many assessments at the same time" was identified as stressful, although opportunities must be seized when they arise.

The assessments also highlighted or confirmed persistent challenges such as **financial sustainability** and addressing **human/personnel capacity shortages**.

3.3 Lessons Learned and Risks Ahead

Key lessons learned from the overall assessment journey include:

- Ensuring participants have the **"right mindset"** and understand the assessment's purpose and expectations.

- Acknowledging that "**no result is bad**"—each outcome serves as a form of validation rather than judgement—helps identify areas for growth and guides future improvement.
- Realizing the SRC has the agency to decline any recommendations that are deemed not feasible or not aligned with capacity or priorities.

For the Market Study specifically, it highlighted the significant untapped potential in individual giving in Slovakia and underscored the importance of enhancing the SRC's visibility through campaigns and marketing efforts to capitalize on this. It also revealed challenges such as limited resources for domestic fundraising and difficulty in engaging branches.

Despite the challenges and the workload, the assessments are viewed positively as a necessary and valuable step. The SRC leadership expresses trust in the assessment processes themselves, seeing them as established tools.

3.4 How the Findings Will Be Used for the Future

- The SRC is actively working to **combine and merge the results** from the various assessments, such as PER and OCAC. This process is intended to **collectively contribute to the strengthening of the National Society**.
- An **initial Plan of Action** has already been developed based on the PER and OCAC outcomes, outlining priority actions for institutional strengthening and community engagement.
- The SRC intends to **adjust and enrich this existing PoA** once the analysis from other assessments, such as the CEA baseline, is completed. This aims to create a more targeted and realistic approach to institutionalizing key areas like the CEA.
- The assessment results will inform the **setting of targets** within the SRC's strategic planning process, for areas such as digitization and preparedness.

These efforts will guide target-setting in strategic planning, particularly in organizational transformation, digitization, and preparedness. This is a long journey, but the difference is clear: the SRC is no longer walking in the dark. It now has a roadmap, a compass, and a shared sense of purpose to guide the way.

3.4 Reflection: A National Society That Leads with Clarity and Conviction

These assessments and steps taken by the Slovak RC mean confidence, Clarity, and credibility. It means that the team believes in possible change, the leadership has learnt to listen, and the organization is stronger, smarter, and more connected to the communities it serves.

Finally, how the National Society sees these assessments and what it brings to their organization can be summarized as providing a **valued, written basis for understanding their current state, confirming knowns, offering external validation, and collectively serving as a critical foundation and roadmap for strategic planning, transformation, and future growth, despite the acknowledged burden of time and resources required to undertake them and implement their findings**. They have initiated a journey of self-discovery and growth that empowers colleagues and is helping to align the organization's efforts for greater impact.

This is a transformation from within, and it is only just beginning. The road ahead will be challenging, as the Slovak Red Cross will require relevant expertise, organizational restructuring, and financial resources to implement the findings. Peer support from other National Societies in Europe will also be essential in this journey.

References

1. [IFRC Overview Assessment Development processes](#)
2. SRC's Fundraising Market Study report
3. SRC's Organizational Capacity Assessment Report
4. SRC's PER report
5. SRC's Digital Maturity Assessment Report
6. SRC's draft report on Community Engagement Baseline Survey

The Fundamental Principles of the **International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement**

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

