GUIDANCE NOTE 1:

Methods for Effective and Participatory Community Engagement

Introduction

Using social ecology and systems approaches to CCP means you understand risk and protection from the points of view of the children, their families, and their communities. You look at how families and communities function to understand how they can support and strengthen protective elements. You want to understand influences on child development, risk, and protection, such as culture, power dynamics, gender norms, socio-political factors, etc., as well as the connections between the formal and informal systems that operate at various levels of the communities. Meaningful community engagement builds on participatory learning.

For further information on the social ecological and systems approach to CP, see Standard 14 of the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

Analyzing existing information and, if needed, collecting new data to better understand CP issues are critical at all stages of a humanitarian action. It is critical to include an analysis and mapping of existing community capacities and resources. These are important foundations on which to base support of the community to tap into its strengths and develop appropriate supports that build on and not undermine capacities and promote resilience.

Desk reviews are important to establish a baseline of knowledge before planning for a deeper context analysis. In this first, more general, step of data collection, aim to gather information on:

- Demographics
- Local understanding of child protection concepts, such as “child,” and well-being, for example.
- Aspects of culture and society that influence risk and protection, and how those are understood
- Humanitarian impacts on children, adolescents, youth, families, and communities

After gaining a general understanding about the context in which the program will be implemented, there are several methods that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the social ecology and protection environment in a community, including Participatory Action Research and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Below is an overview of easy-to-use and adaptable methods. It is important that field staff who will be engaging community members with these tools are well-trained and confident in how to apply them.

Guiding principles and key considerations when using methods for community engagement

The use of these tools requires following certain principles and observing some ethical considerations.

Do no harm

You must ensure that appropriate steps are taken to prevent and mitigate any type of harm to the community members with whom you are engaged. These could range from raising unrealistic expectations, to worsening conflict, and causing psychological distress. Set very clear expectations for participation and never make promises you cannot fulfill.

The following are particularly important considerations in undertaking this work.

Informed consent

- Assure community members that their engagement is voluntary and their participation does not determine their access to services.
- When you are collecting information from the community, explain why and how any information is collected, and how it will be used.
- Set very clear expectations for participation and never make promises you cannot fulfill.
- When involving children, provide information that is appropriate to the development, gender, and abilities; there must be assent from their parents to participate.
- For participants with different abilities, ensure that the consent procedure is adapted to their needs.

In planning community-level work, analyze the potential risks and challenges to gain informed consent and plan to avoid or mitigate those. These may be caused by many factors, such as power dynamics, language, raised expectations, social norms, etc.

Confidentiality

Community engagement will often address sensitive, even taboo, topics, and trust will not be built unless people feel assured that what they share will be protected. Develop a confidentiality plan that will be shared with community members. Consider the following:

- Provide spaces that offer privacy, in which people will feel safest to speak openly in interviews or group discussions.
- Offer safe storage of written notes, photos, and audio/video tapes (if applicable), and only use those after receiving permission.
- Do not record names with identifying features without permission; general descriptors are used in publicly available documents (e.g., 20-year old mother).
- Agree on how to respond appropriately to sensitive issues if they arise.

Child safeguarding

Each agency has a Child Safeguarding Policy that applies to all staff who are directly in contact with children in the community, and includes any consultants, partner staff, or volunteers conducting community engagement activities with the agency or on the agency's behalf.

Meaningful participation of children and adolescents

Effective CCP approaches honor children's and adolescents' capacities to meaningfully contribute to their own protection, your programming, and to community life. The perception of children on their protection can differ from the perception of adults and should therefore be listened to. Child-sensitive and adolescent-appropriate methods and approaches that consider different developmental stages and abilities are important to create space for effective participation.

Boys and girls have unique contributions that should be recognized and facilitated with sensitivity. You should demonstrate to the children that their contributions are being taken seriously and contributing to protection efforts.

Inclusiveness

Ensure inclusive representation in your approaches. In addition to community leaders and key stakeholders, be sure to involve members of the community who do not always influence decision making or who are marginalized. These voices often bring unique perspectives on CP concerns and capacities.

Avoiding assessment fatigue

When various humanitarian actors conduct assessments in the same community, it can cause confusion, frustration, anger, or distress. Plan community work based on what other community-level assessment or context analysis has been done, or is underway, so there is no duplication of activities. Strong collaboration with other humanitarian actors is important in respecting the community's time and effort.

Preventing and responding to distress

Efforts to understand community protection concerns and risks are not intended to inquire about specific cases of violence or abuse. Mention of these events may, however, arise in discussion if participants share painful experiences, causing them distress. Have a plan for these occasions to minimize the harm to participants. Some suggestions:

- Prepare in advance who or where it would be most important to refer someone who is distressed (e.g., natural helpers, social workers, religious leaders).
- Ensure you use or develop an organizational CP urgent action/adverse events procedure outlining how your agency will respond to disclosures.
- Do not encourage participants to share deeply personal, potentially painful things.
- Pay attention to body language and verbal cues that could indicate distress and suggest discontinuing the discussion for the moment; ask if they would like to speak with someone in their community for support.
- At the agency level, plan for psychosocial support for field workers who may also be distressed by reports that are shared with them, ensuring them that it is provided in a confidential and culturally appropriate manner.

Accountability

Besides avoiding harm, an important principle in CCP is that as you learn and take information from the community, there is, in return, a tangible benefit to the community.

This may include useful information on resources and support, reporting back to acknowledge their contributions to the work, and other actions that can have positive social impacts.

Often, CP actors cannot address the priority needs shared by community members because they do not fall into the CP mandate, there is not enough capacity to respond, or other reasons. You should make this clear to participants at the start of your engagement and explain how this information will be relayed to relevant actors who can follow up.

Attitudes and soft skills when using methods for community engagement

Effective facilitation requires approaching community engagement with respect, humility, and willingness to genuinely listen and value the knowledge of community members.

This goes beyond trying to train staff to have qualities such as empathy, openness, and humility; it implies the need to emphasize an organizational culture in which agencies define interactions by those values. In turn, these same values would then influence programmatic interventions.

Methods

What is most important about the choice of methods used is that they facilitate information collection in ways that are highly participatory and adaptable to different contexts. Discussed here are some of the participatory methods commonly used. It is important to use more than one tool to collect the same information, as this allows "triangulation" of information from other methods to validate overall findings or see contrasting findings that need to be analyzed further.

Another consideration is the order in which methods are used. In-depth interviews may be the most intrusive interactions and probably should not be used until individuals know and trust you. Observation makes your presence in the community known and gives you an opportunity to begin to speak with people. Group discussions can be facilitated in ways that build confidence and trust, without getting too personal.

Prior to using the chosen method in a community, go through a process of cultural adaptation to ensure sensitivity of the method and questions to the context in which it is implemented. With all methods it is important that, at the end of a session, you summarize the findings or content of the interview and discussion to ensure you have understood the participants' contributions. This will improve the quality of the information and demonstrate respect to the participants.

The subsequent Guidance Note 3 and Guidance Note 5 will explore what key questions might be useful for mapping protective capacities and risks, understanding community concepts of CP, prioritizing risks, and developing action plans. Depending on the information needed, different methods can be used. It is important to realize that concepts such as "children," "community," "protection," etc., are understood differently across contexts.

It is therefore recommended you adapt these concepts together with community members prior to collection of information to ensure you ask relevant questions.

Methods specific to children's participation are found in the guidance on How Do We Meaningfully Involve Children? (see Guidance Note 7).

Group discussions

These are semi-structured or structured processes that draw out experiences, perceptions, priorities, and solutions regarding CP risks. They should be conducted in medium-sized groups, in separate groupings based on gender and age, and as determined by social and cultural practice.

Group discussions are a common format for gaining a better understanding of community concepts of child development, risk, and protection; priority concerns about children and family; capacities and resources at the family and community level; as well as for action planning and follow-up monitoring of CCP initiatives. The benefit of focus group discussions is that they offer opportunities to observe dynamics among individuals, and the structure can create a natural discussion where people brainstorm and encourage others to share ideas and stories. Facilitators can use participatory methodologies, such as ranking/scoring exercises, diagrams, timelines, and functional mapping of CP systems. However, if not facilitated well, focus group discussions can lead to bias (e.g., you may only hear from the loudest person in the room) and are difficult to analyze.

Defining a focus group

- A focus group is a small group of 6 to 10 people led through an open discussion by a skilled moderator. The group needs to be large enough to generate rich discussion but not so large that some participants are left out.
- The focus group moderator nurtures sharing and dialogue in an open and spontaneous format. The moderator's goal is to generate a maximum number of different ideas and opinions from as many different people as possible in the time allotted.
- The ideal amount of time to set aside for a focus group is anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes. Beyond that, most groups are not productive, and it becomes an imposition on the participants' time.
- Focus groups are structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions, usually no more than 10, but the discussion is free flowing. Questions might come up that were not pre-prepared, creating an opportunity to explore important topics. Participants' comments can stimulate and influence the thinking and sharing of others. Some people even find themselves changing their thoughts and opinions during the group.
- Group considerations around age, gender, class, etc., are important to enable safe space for discussion, and minimizing domination by some participants.
- It takes more than one focus group on any one topic to produce valid results – usually three or four. You will know you have conducted enough groups (with the same set of questions) when you are not hearing anything new anymore; that is, you have reached a point of saturation.

Designing focus group questions

The ideal number of questions for any one group is 8-12, with the fewer the better. Focus group participants will not have a chance to see the questions they are being asked. So, to make sure they understand and can fully respond to the questions posed, questions should be:

- Short and to the point
- Focused on one dimension each

- Unambiguously worded
- Open-ended or sentence completion types
- Non-threatening or embarrassing
- Worded in a way that they cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” answer (use “why” and “how” instead)

There are three types of focus group questions:

1. Engagement questions: introduce participants to and make them comfortable with the topic of discussion
2. Exploration questions: get to the core of the discussion
3. Exit questions: check to see if anything was missed in the discussion

You may need to use translators in your focus group discussion. If so, be sure to prepare the translators so the translated questions are not simply literally repetitive of the original question, but that they really get to the point you want to reach with your original questions.

Recruiting and preparing for participants

In an ideal focus group, all the participants are very comfortable with each other but not necessarily know each other. Homogeneity is key to maximizing disclosure among focus group participants. Consider the following in establishing selection criteria for individual groups:

- Gender – Will both men and women feel comfortable discussing the topic in a mixed gender group?
- Age – What is the minimum age for children participating in a focus group (e.g., able to clearly consent to participate and communicate)? How intimidating would it be for a young person to be included in a group of older adults? Or vice versa?
- Power – Would a teacher be likely to make candid remarks in a group where his/her principal is also a participant?
- Participant inclusion/exclusion criteria should be considered—will pre-determining such criteria risk leaving people out of the process, potentially causing unintended har.

Focus group participants can be recruited in any one of a number of ways. Some of the most popular include:

- Nomination – Key individuals nominate people they think would make good participants. Nominees are familiar with the topic, known for their ability to respectfully share their opinions, and willing to volunteer about 1½ hours of their time. This could include purposefully selecting some of the poorest, most marginalized adolescents and adults, who may be well-placed to reach the most vulnerable children.
- Random selection – If participants will come from a large but defined group (e.g., an entire high school) with many eager participants, names can be randomly drawn from a hat until the desired number of verified participants is achieved.
- All members of the same group – Sometimes an already existing group serves as an ideal pool from which to invite participants (e.g., Community Network, Youth Group, etc.).
- Same role/job title – Depending on the topic, the pool might be defined by position, title, or condition (e.g., community health nurses, parents of teenage boys).

- Tell participants that the focus group will take about 1½ to 2 hours. Give them a starting time that is 15 minutes prior to the actual start of the focus group to allow for filling out necessary paperwork, having a bite to eat, and settling into the group. Arrange for a comfortable place in a convenient location. Depending on your group, you may also want to consider transportation. Arrange for food. At a minimum, offer a beverage and light snack.

Conducting the focus group

Ideally, the focus group is conducted by a team consisting of a moderator and assistant moderator (or notetaker). The moderator facilitates the discussion; the assistant takes notes. The ideal focus group moderator has the following traits:

- Can listen attentively with sensitivity and empathy
- Is able to listen and think at the same time
- Believes that all group participants have something to offer no matter what their education, experience, or background
- Has adequate knowledge of the topic
- Can keep personal views and ego out of the facilitation
- Is someone the group can relate to but also give authority to (e.g., a male moderator is most appropriate for a group of all men discussing sexual harassment in the workplace)
- Can appropriately manage challenging group dynamics

The assistant moderator must be able to do the following:

- Take notes
- Note/record body language or other subtle but relevant clues
- Allow the moderator to do all the talking during the group
- Both moderator and assistant moderator are expected to welcome participants and offer them food, if available.

Do not forget to remind participants that:

- Participation is voluntary
- Nobody has to answer questions if they do not want to answer
- Participants can leave the focus group discussion at any time

It may be important to collect demographic information from participants if age, gender, or other attributes are important for correlation with focus group findings. Design a short half-page form for the facilitator to document this information. Administer it before the focus group begins. The moderator uses a prepared script to welcome participants, reminds them of the purpose of the group, and also to set ground rules.

Consent

Before anything else, you must seek consent to participate. All focus group participants should be read out loud and given paper copies of a consent form, which states the purpose of the focus group, how the information they offer (or photographs) will be used, any potential risks and benefits, and that they agree to participate. Consent should be documented (either in signature form or verbally, with the assistant facilitator taking notes). Any participant has the right to refuse to consent and may leave the focus group at this point.

Focus Group Introduction

Welcome

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group. We appreciate your willingness to participate.

Introductions

Moderator; Assistant moderator

Purpose of Focus Groups

We have been asked by _____ to conduct the focus groups.
The reason we are having these focus groups is to find out _____.
We need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.

Ground Rules

1. We want you to do the talking.
    a. We would like everyone to participate.
    b. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
    c. If you do not wish to answer, that is perfectly fine; just say "I do not wish to speak now."

2. There are no right or wrong answers.
    a. Every person's experiences and opinions are important.
    b. Speak up whether you agree or disagree.
    c. We want to hear a wide range of opinions.

3. What is said in this room stays here.

    We want folks to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up. This means that we all need to agree not to share what we talk about here with those who are not in the room with us now.

4. We will be taking notes.
    a. We want to capture everything you have to say.
    b. We don't identify anyone by name in our report. You will remain anonymous.
    c. Do we have your permission to take notes?

- Before asking the first focus group question, an icebreaker can be inserted to increase comfort and level the playing field.
- The focus group facilitator has a responsibility to adequately cover all prepared questions within the time allotted. S/he also has a responsibility to get all participants to talk and fully explain their answers. Some helpful probes include:
    - "Can you talk about that more?"
    - "Help me understand what you mean."
    - "Can you give an example?"
- It is good facilitator practice to paraphrase and summarize long, complex, or ambiguous comments. It demonstrates active listening and clarifies the comment for everyone in the group.
- Because the facilitator holds a position of authority and perceived influence, s/he must remain neutral, agreeing/disagreeing, or praising/denigrating any comment made. It is good practice to explain in advance, for example, that a nod means a participant has been heard, and does not indicate agreement.

A moderator must tactfully deal with challenging participants.

- Here are some appropriate strategies:
    - The dominator: "It is important that each person have a voice in this discussion, so let's hear from someone who has not spoken yet.."
    - The participant who is overly talkative: Stop eye contact; look at your watch; jump in at their inhale.
    - The shy participant: Make eye contact; call on them; smile at them.
    - The participant who talks very quietly: Ask them to repeat their response more loudly.
- When the focus group is complete, the moderator thanks all participants.
- Immediately after all participants leave, the moderator and assistant moderator debrief all the notes with the date, time (if more than one group per day), and the name of the group.

One useful type of focus group discussion is Participatory Listing and Ranking, which asks participants to prioritize important aspects of CP in their context. In an assessment this helps the CP actor to understand the community's most important concerns, needs, resources, etc. It is also an important tool in developing community Action Plans. See Guidance Note 6 for details.

Community Mapping: Documentation Template

Community mapping is an illustration of key features in the community from the perspective of its members. This can be used to highlight areas in the community where children and adolescents feel protected or at risk, and to identify social groups that may be marginalized or in other ways most vulnerable. It is also important to identify strengths and resources that can be built on in contextually and sustainable ways. Mapping can be done by men and women, youth, and children, often producing differing perspectives that can enrich your analysis – especially when mappings by one group are shared with another!

Mapping is a highly participatory activity that is done in small groups that jointly develop their community map. Maps can be drawn on large sheets of paper with markers, as well as on the ground using local materials (e.g., sticks, stones, other objects to represent structures).

This method also should be used as one of several methods to compare and validate findings.

Objectives of the Session: At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Share their experiences during the conflict.
- Identify areas where they feel safe and unsafe in their communities.

Time Requirement: 1 hour

Materials Needed: Blue, red, and green (or other three colors) markers/crayons, flipchart paper, and masking tape.

Process and Discussion:

1. Ask participants to break into two groups (if less than five participants, do not break into groups). Give each group a flipchart paper and ask them to draw a map of the community using a **Black** marker. Encourage them to think of places where they spend a lot of time, where they go each day, where their friends and family go, what are the important buildings, markets, etc.?
2. Once they have drawn the map, prompt them to do the following on the map:
    a. Using a **Blue** marker, circle areas where they spend most of their time.
        ✓ Prompt Questions: Ask them about their daily activities, where do they go during the day? Where do they fetch water? Where do they go during the evening/night? Where do they fetch firewood? What about recreation/entertainment, Mosque/Church, boreholes, market, farmland, etc.?
    b. Using a **Red** marker, put an X in areas where they do not feel safe.
        ✓ Prompt Questions: Ask them about areas where violence usually occurs, such as beatings, sexual assault, bullying, theft, etc. Which areas are frequently attacked by armed groups, gangs, etc.? Which areas are usually not accessible due to security reasons?
    c. Using a **Green** marker, circle areas where you feel safe.
        ✓ Prompt Questions: Ask them about areas where they go without any fear of attack. Which areas do you go for help? Where do you feel happy, healthy, or enjoy time with friends and family?

Closing: Thank everyone for their time and support and explain the next steps in the process.

Observation: Documentation Template

Introduction

Observation is the process of being physically present in the community and documenting the daily activities of community members as they relate to children. More than visual observation, it also involves what you hear when children are engaged in interactions with people in their daily life, such as parents, peers, teachers, community leaders, etc. Participant observation is ethical since it does not position the observer so far apart from local people and does not objectify them. It is good practice in the initial learning phase of you community engagement.

Observation can also be prone to bias, and it can affect the behavior of some individuals if you are not familiar with the community. Observation is therefore most effectively done when spending a long time in the community so that people get used to your presence. If possible, it is beneficial to stay in the community outside of "office hours" to understand what happens at different points in time. This methodology should be used alongside other methods to verify that your observations are accurate. Observation can take different forms, such as:

- **Physical mapping:** This is the observation of the physical structures and spaces in the community and how different people interact with them. For example, where boys and girls of different ages are present or not present and where children interact with adults. You will take notes about spaces that seem particularly relevant to CP issues – spaces that protect children and those who pose risks.
- **Transect walks:** These walks can begin as a predetermined route to walk through the physical layout of a community. It will orient you to the physical and social spaces, and help you identify places where you would like to spend more time observing. This type of mapping can be very useful to do with children. Transect walks can also illustrate social interactions in public spaces. How do boys and girls of different ages interact with each other and with men and women? What do you observe about gender and power dynamics, inclusivity or marginalization, and other social considerations? Stopping and talking with different people, including those from poorer families, is also encouraged, as this process helps to build relationships with community members.

During the observation you will jot notes in a notebook and type them up as soon as possible after the activity. You can use this template to organize the information afterwards and compare it to findings of other methods.

SAMPLE TEMPLATE

Location:	
Team Members:	
Date:	
Start and End Time of Activity:	
Method(s) of Observation (e.g., transect walk, spending time in one location):	

Location	Who Was there?	What were they doing?
Market	*Women and men traders, older boys, adolescent boys*	*Selling goods and food, talking with each other, selling shopping bags, cleaning food stalls, carrying goods to vehicles*

Other General Observations
Men and women did not interact very much.

In planning your observation activities, you would have considered some of the priority information you wanted to collect; for example, what are the common activities of adolescent boys and girls during a certain part of the day? What roles do young boys and girls play in public spaces? You may have put these in the form of key questions you wanted them to answer, or a listing of information. Once you have done this, What have you learned from your observations related to your research?

Information Sought / Key Questions	Data
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

In-depth Interview: Documentation Template

Introduction

These are one-on-one conversations with a semi-structured format to gain first-hand feelings, perspectives, and experiences relating to the key questions you want answered. It is important to use open-ended questions that allow the person being interviewed to describe their responses without a simple "yes" or "no." This method requires active listening skills, and the ability to ask follow-up probing questions to enrich the information that is gathered. There should be a notetaker for detailed written notes, and an audio recording with permission, if possible.

The selection of community members to interview may come after you have conducted an observation and group activities to build some recognition and trust in the community. They may be individuals you observed or identified as playing an important role for children in the community. They may also recommend others with relevant experience for you to interview. Below is a sample from the Key Informant Interview Template by Plan International used in an investigation about child early and forced marriage (CEFM). You can adapt tools to your specific questions and document your interviews.

Location:	
Team Members:	
Date:	
Start and End Time of Activity:	
Participant Description:	

Introduction

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me. My name is _____, and I am working with the [agency]. We are interested in learning more about the needs and priorities of adolescent girls in [country/community]. We would also like to understand parents' and caregivers' attitudes toward the provision of adolescent [Sexual and Reproductive Health/ Gender-Based Violence (GBV)/education] and child marriage. Given your role in providing information and services to adolescents, we wanted to take this time to speak with you to learn more about the situation of adolescent girls and how your work addresses their needs. This should take about 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Ensure that informed consent has been given before beginning the interview.

General

First, I'd like to ask you some general questions about your experience working in this setting:

1. Could you tell me a bit about your role working with adolescents in this community? How long have you had this role?
2. In your view, what are the most pressing issues facing adolescent girls in this setting? Can you tell me more about the differences in issues faced by those 10-14 years of age and those 15-19 years of age? What about adolescent girls living with a disability?
3. What support for adolescent girls is currently being provided by community members and external child protection agencies

4. What supports are most important for adolescent girls to access in this setting?
    a. Information needs?
    b. Service needs?
    c. Program needs?

5. What are the key challenges experienced by CEFM programs (or other adolescent programming) in trying to reach adolescent girls?
    a. What challenges might adolescent girls have in receiving information and services?
    b. Are there any challenges regarding attitudes of service providers? Or program staff?
    c. How have these challenges been addressed?

Continue questions, making specific mention to questions that should only be asked to certain informants, such as health workers vs. teachers vs. police, etc.

Closing

For all interviewees:

1. What information would be helpful to know about adolescent girls to provide services that meet their needs?
2. How could you foresee using research on the drivers of CEFM and protective assets/capacities of adolescent girls to inform services or programs?
    a. Are there other agencies (e.g., advocacy, programming, or research) that might be particularly interested in this research?
    b. What knowledge is currently needed for this research that would shape programs for this group?

3. Is there anything more you would like to add?

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions. We very much appreciate your time, as your input will help to shape this research effort going forward. Do you have any final questions?

Suggestions for questions to guide your In-depth Interview, by identifying the most important information you want to collect, can be found in Guidance Note 3 and Guidance Note 5. They are not necessarily intended to be used in a rigid, survey-style questionnaire. The notetaker will write detailed notes and (with consent) audio record the interview. As soon as possible after the interview, type up the verbatim notes in their entirety, according to the question (if they followed the questions).

You will return to your key questions and see what information you gained related to them. This can be put in a simple table, as seen below, or on a spreadsheet.

Question	Responses
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Additional comments:	
Observations:	
Comments about the process for shared learning:	

Documentation and reporting

These approaches provide a lot of information that will need to be analyzed, so it is important to have a plan for notetaking during activities, documentation, and storage. This will depend on the extent of the context analysis you plan to conduct and the resources available (including staff).

It is important that detailed documentation be done as soon as possible after sessions to ensure accuracy. Reporting must be timely, as the relevance of the information collected may change over time.

Recording

It is highly recommended to have a dedicated notetaker, in addition to a facilitator, for each activity. The use of audio/video recordings can help with accuracy, though it may not be acceptable in some community contexts. It is also important to record non-verbal communication, which requires attentiveness and astute observation.

Documentation

It can be a challenge to manage large amounts of written information, and you will have to plan for that, based on your available resources. Methods of organizing "themes" that arise from all of your information can range from using note cards of differing colors, to spreadsheets and qualitative data software. Determine what will be most effective based on your technical and material resources. If you have a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) unit in your agency, seek their technical guidance.

Storage

Confidentiality is one of the key principles in CP work, and community members who share their experiences and perspectives with you must be assured that theirs will be respected. Make an information storage plan for all documentation—written, audio/video recorded, photos, and electronic documents. This could include locked storage spaces with limited access and password-protected electronic documents. Include steps for long-term storage or destruction of materials. These plans should be shared with the community.

Dissemination

The collected information should be disseminated back to members in the community in an appropriate way. This can be discussed with community members during the data collection.

GUIDANCE NOTE 2:

Facilitating Discussions on Children's Risks and Protection

The key to successful community engagement is facilitation. How we engage with children, youth, parents, community leaders, and others is as important as our technical expertise in CP. It is important to approach communities not as "experts," but as facilitators of shared efforts to protect their children, and open to learning from communities being experts in their own lives. Effective facilitators are:

- **Learners***:* humble, open to new ideas, flexible to new ways of doing things, willing to build on existing knowledge with new information, do not judge the community they are working with, etc.
- **Listeners***:* attentive, engaged, curious, patient, emphasizing dialogue and not lectures
- **Negotiators***:* open to tension, understand and manage power dynamics, willing to see different sides of issues, gently persuasive, comfortable not controlling the discussion, and committed to positive outcomes for all participants with a specific focus on age, gender, and inclusion dimensions
- **Observers***:* sensitive to non-verbal cues/body language, interpersonal dynamics with a specific focus on age, gender, and inclusion dimensions

Not all these attitudes and dispositions, or "soft skills," can be taught, but they can be cultivated through reflection, practice, and institutionalizing them in organizational culture.[1]

How can I be a facilitator of community dialogue and action?

Genuine collaboration is built on respect and trusting relationships. There are values, attitudes, and behaviors that can promote facilitative, collaborative approaches. Consider some behavioral competencies that can foster effective community engagement:

- Acting as a catalyst or facilitator to enable shared discussion, decision making, and consensual actions; not as an "expert"
- Listening to community members in a deep and engaged manner to understand their concerns, hopes, and fears; helping to guide discussions toward group problem-solving without injecting personal or organizational bias, but providing options
- Working to build trust among community members and with humanitarian actors through patience and time spent together; relationship-building is a long-term investment
- Appreciating community members' local understandings of risks to children, the resources they have at hand, and the supports they require
- Being able to understand within the local culture the power dynamics related to gender and age, to create opportunities to change harmful social norms, and to make space for marginalized voices
- Adaptable to different styles of participant engagement
- Having the skills to mobilize communities, energize individuals, and create teamwork around shared goals
- Being flexible and adaptable to new ideas and ways of working

There are several skills that you need to be effective facilitators that are discussed below.

Communication

> ***Our verbal and non-verbal communication can either reinforce or undermine the way you (humanitarian actors) communicate, so it is important to become aware of all the elements involved in the communication process. Your communication skills also help you to convey many of the principles and values on which CP work is based and help in creating trust and showing respect to the individuals and communities with whom they work.[2]***

Communication is one of the most important elements of facilitative approaches. It seems like something you do naturally, but it is influenced by many factors in your environment, such as culture and social norms, as well as other factors, such as age, gender, power dynamics, etc. Styles of communication can vary greatly across cultures, and not being sensitive to differences can lead to difficulties in your CCP work.

Communication involves more than just language. Verbal communication also involves tone and volume, for example. Much of your communication is non-verbal (or body language), which can be subtle and difficult to perceive. Non-verbal communication is also influenced by culture and social norms, such as:

- Not looking someone in the eyes while talking: In some cultures, this is interpreted as someone is too shy and lacks confidence. In other cultures, this can be a sign of respect and deference.
- Standing very close while talking: In some cultures, this can be a sign of openness and trust. In others, it can be perceived as being overly assertive and rude.

As external actors, it is your responsibility to learn about the cultural and social influences on communication styles and develop an understanding of what might present challenges in your work. For this reason, engaging members of the community to be facilitators will help to promote more effective communication.

Communication skills

It was stated at the beginning of this Guidance Note that good facilitators are Learners. When facilitators engage with community members, they learn through keen observation and listening. Listening allows you to gain a deeper understanding of the community CP risks, protective capacities, and resources. Importantly, it also gives community collaborators an opportunity to reflect on their situation, voice their concerns and their knowledge, and problem-solve, among other things. This process is empowering and builds mutual respect and trust.

In multiple discussions with men and women displaced by the Marawi siege, Philippines Pilot Country team members listened to participants share what supports have been particularly meaningful in the humanitarian response. Most conversations turned to what needs still remained and requests for specific assistance. As the discussions wrapped up, the team explained what they could and could not follow up on. In response, every group shared that it was just valuable that the team took time to be there and listen. With emotion, some participants said that they had not felt heard before, and it was reassuring.

Matunggao Baquit Village, Balo-I, Lanao del Norte (2018, December); Marawi City (2019, August and October) Sarimanok Site 1, Boganga Transitory Camp, Barangay Malimono

Active listening

Active listening is an engaged form of listening and is critical in CCP. It is patient, curious, probing, and encouraging. There are techniques that can be practiced, but it really requires the "soft skills" discussed in the Key Considerations and Guidance Note 11 — empathy, respect, and humility.

Below is a summary of the key characteristics of active listening:[3]

Asking open questions	Questions that cannot be answered with just a yes, no, or one-word answer. For example, "What are your main concerns for your child's well-being?"
Avoiding closed questions	Questions that can be answered with a one-word answer should be avoided, although they can be useful to clarify situations. For example, "Did you eat today?"
Reflecting back	Showing that what was said was heard by repeating what was said. For example, "I am so busy I never have time." Respond: "So there is never any time?"
Summarizing	Briefly summing up what was said. This is an especially useful technique for showing people they were heard and for clarifying that what was said was understood, particularly when a long story or answer was given.
Clarifying questions	Questions that help people clarify what they think or feel and to check the understanding. For example, "So were you angry because of X or Y?"
Considering "why" questions	Questions that start with "why" get at important information; however, in some contexts they may seem to show judgment or blame and could make people defensive. They can also be complex for young children. "Why" questions may be useful to probe responses, such as "Why do you think this happened?"

Managing conflict

> ***Effective facilitators do not hide from or downplay conflict. In fact, they learn to view conflict as a potentially constructive force that can stir creative thinking and enable a full exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of different views.[4]***

People can have very strong views about risks and protection of children; when these are divergent, group processes can experience tension or conflict. Power dynamics can also affect group settings, potentially stifling participation by those who feel they hold less power than others in the group due to age, gender, socio-economic, or civil status, for example.

Learning about existing community structures, social and cultural norms, and power, gender, and age dynamics is important in helping you to prepare for potential conflicts that may arise in your community engagement. There are some basic steps that can be taken to prevent and mitigate the impacts of conflict and power dynamics, such as:

- Begin group discussions by clarifying that the conversation should be a dialogue that you respect and value participants' different views. Hearing different views is important for you to develop a deeper understanding of the context.
- Structure the discussion enough so that it can be guided to the information you want, and not taken in many directions. This requires thinking through your key questions, determining how to organize them, and anticipating differing responses. Consider how to sensitively foster a sense of inclusiveness if tensions do arise.
- Be very attentive to who is speaking and who is not. Based on what you have learned about the cultural aspects of communication, work to be as inclusive as you can of those who do want to participate but are not; you may see this in their body language.
- Do not force people to speak, as this could cause embarrassment and hurt.
- As you get to know the community, you may find natural leaders who can advise you on group dynamics and co-facilitate, if that seems appropriate.

After every group dialogue, reflect on the process, what challenges arose, what did you handle well, and how could it be improved. You will begin to learn more about the cultural and social considerations, including the power and gender dynamics. Apply this learning to each future group process, and you will gain confidence in managing conflict.

GUIDANCE NOTE 3:

Mapping the Context: How Do We Understand Existing Protection Capacities and Risks in the Community?

Introduction

CCP approaches can only be effective and sustainable if they are grounded in, and built on, the existing capacities and resources in the community. It is also important to understand how those have been impacted by the humanitarian situation. Time, patience, and trust-building are required for humanitarian CP actors to gain a rich understanding of the environment.

These processes do not replace rapid needs assessments but should build on them. They emphasize highly participatory methods described below. They should be carried out by CP actors who can spend quality time in communities, or preferably, come from the community.

When does this happen?

Context analysis should be an ongoing process in CCP. We often speak of "mapping exercises," which are usually well-designed activities that require some additional resources. These are an excellent starting point but should not be the end of learning and documentation to inform program design. Communities in humanitarian contexts are often in flux, and their resources, capacities, and needs change rapidly.

Mapping and context analysis are important at different stages in humanitarian work, for example:

- In early warning settings as a basis for community-driven preparedness planning
- Entry into a new context of protracted crisis to develop programming that is highly community driven from the outset, with a focus on sustainable efforts in recovery stages, and/or factoring in preparedness for possible future emergencies
- Transitioning from programming that is no longer able to be externally driven; for example, with significant changes in funding (it must be noted, this is challenging, and the humanitarian community still has a lot to learn about how to do this effectively)
- Consideration should be made about how to build in the foundation for longer term, participatory engagement with communities from the beginning.

Some considerations for conducting a deep context analysis in humanitarian contexts

The attitudes and capacities to undertake these learning and planning activities are not so different between development and humanitarian contexts. Below are some considerations to highlight in humanitarian contexts.

- The often rapid and continuously evolving protection environment in humanitarian settings requires you to understand risks and protective capacities that may have existed prior to the emergency, if/how the emergency has affected it, and how those impacts vary over time.

- "Communities" you engage with in humanitarian contexts may be much more diverse, less cohesive with displacement, and affected by other influences. You cannot assume there is "a" community to mobilize and that issues of inter-communal conflict may be greater. This requires you to have specialized skills in conflict analysis and sensitive programming, for example.
- Communities may be facing new CP concerns for which they previously did not have protective mechanisms and capacities.
- Mobilization of community members may be difficult due to lack of access or insecurity. Strategies need to be developed to address those concerns.
- As in development contexts, each member of a "community" belongs to a number of communities simultaneously; for example, religious or ethnic groups, clans, digital communities. These affiliations may be suddenly altered in an emergency, through displacement or lack of access to communication, further altering the protective environment that had existed.

Where to start?

To begin any sort of mapping exercise, it is important to establish what information already exists. If your programming has been informed by context analyses or child rights/protection situational analyses, they are your starting point to assess the changing situation. Other information to inform your updated analysis may include multi-sector rapid assessments, CP rapid assessments, situational reports, etc.

An important resource for information is coordination mechanisms, such as the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, under the Protection Cluster. They will have access to secondary data and context analysis, as well as relevant information from other sectors/clusters. Importantly, they coordinate all the CP agencies to streamline assessment processes, which reduces the burden on communities when numerous agencies seek the same information.

Taking a longer approach, you will build on the situation analysis and focus on specific CP risks, to a broader and deeper understanding of how those risks are understood by different members of the community, how they are being addressed, and work toward problem-solving as to how the community can drive action to address them.

This process begins by clarifying what it is you want to learn and understand, how you can undertake that learning, and who should be engaged. Here, you will focus on the broader questions of existing risks and protection capacities in the community. Subsequent guidance notes will address other elements of context analysis to be included in mapping exercises.

What do we want to learn?

> ***All CP systems are determined by traditions, customs, norms, and economic, political, historical, geographical, and natural settings. Thus, context is of utmost importance. Significant events such as natural disasters, economic downturn, change in government, social movements, health crises, conflict, and complex emergencies may all heighten CP needs, weaken the capacity for response, and alter how systems operate.***[5]

Developing key questions on what you want to explore is important in structuring your mapping and analysis. Some illustrative questions are presented below to help you begin to think about what is important to understand in your context. This is not an exhaustive list.[6]

Please note, these questions are not intended to be used in the form of a questionnaire. They outline the kinds of information you want to understand the context more thoroughly.

As you explore these questions, you need to try to understand the community context prior to the emergency, the current context, and how they differ. Along with the community, you can then analyze the existing capacities/resources and gaps that might appropriately be supported by external actors to build back to previous capacities that promoted protection. You can also identify possibilities for social norm change around previous practices that may have contributed to CP risk. This analysis will be the basis for then developing contextualized and community-driven actions.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Core Questions Template

Developing core questions on what you want to explore is important in structuring your mapping and analysis. Some illustrative questions are presented below to help you begin to think about what is important to understand in your context. This is not an exhaustive list.

These are not intended to be used as questionnaires or surveys, but to prioritize the kinds of information you want to gather to design your interventions. All information should be disaggregated by gender and age groups (e.g., 5 years and under; 6-11 years; 12-17 years).

Sample Core Guiding Questions to Understand Community Protection Capacities	*Pre-emergency*	*Current Context*	*Gaps Identified*
Community Capacities and Resources			
What are the traditional structures, groups, systems, or processes that are seen to play a role in child protection?			
How do they function (e.g., independently, interrelatedly, with external support)?			
How are they understood/perceived by different groups in the community (i.e., are they representative of most members of the community)?			
Are there individuals outside of this that play a protective role as natural helpers? If so, who are they?			
What actions do they undertake to prevent and respond to child protection risks?			
Are there nontraditional structures that play a role in child protection (e.g., Child Protection Committees or Networks, children's groups, Child-Friendly Spaces, etc., established by external actors?			
What are the roles that children, youth, men, and women play in them (e.g., design, functioning, resourcing, monitoring, evaluating)?			
What protection activities do they prioritize? Why?			

How are they perceived by different members of the community?			
Do they engage with the traditional structures, groups, systems, or processes? If so, in what ways?			
What actions do they undertake to prevent and respond to child protection risks?			
What are the power structures and dynamics within the community, and do these influence child risk and protection? If so, in what ways?			
What are the gender dynamics within the community, and do these influence child risk and protection? If so, in what ways?			
How is the role of the family understood in relation to risk and protection?			
What are the primary roles caregivers and other family members (e.g., siblings, extended family) play in child protection?			
What supports do families have from the informal/ traditional protection structures, groups, systems, or processes in the community?			
Are these perceived to be supportive? If not, why?			
What actions do they undertake to prevent and respond to child protection risks?			
What are the outcomes of these actions taken by families (positive and negative)?			
How do children participate in community life, or not?			
Are their perspectives on their own risk and protection taken into account in the family? In the community?			
Do they have space(s) in which to meet, share their opinions, and take actions on their behalf? If so, describe. If not, why?			
How is information, generally and specifically, related to child protection, disseminated in the community (e.g., what are the primary forms of communication)?			

Child Protection Risks Identified by the Community			
What are the protection risks children in the community face?			
By developmental stage (as understood by the community)?			
By gender (as understood by the community)?			
By disability?			
Other factors that influence risk (e.g., ethnicity, religion, economic status)			
Are there norms or practices (e.g., social, cultural, religious, and political) in communities, homes, families, and schools that put them at risk for abuse, violence, or neglect?			
If so, what are community perceptions and understanding of these (e.g., are they seen as risk or understood as protective)?			
Is there support or resistance to address them as risk?			
Who/what influences community perceptions of these norms and practices?			
What is the relationship between educational access/ status and protection in the community? If there is, what influences this?			
Are there physical spaces in the community that present protection risks? If so, where are they and why?			
Formal Child Protection Services and Access			
Are there services in the community to protect and provide support to children who are at risk or have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation?			
What are they and what do they provide for children and families (e.g., prevention, response, follow-up services)?			
Are there active service providers?			

What are family and community perceptions of those services?			
Is there available information on how to access them (e.g., directories, public information campaigns)?			
Are they being used? Why?			
Do children and young people affected by abuse, exploitation, or neglect know whom to contact for help?			
Do they feel safe and confident doing that?			
Do they have assistance to facilitate that?			
Does access to existing child protection services differ between community members? If so, how? Why?			
Are there services to meet the particular needs of adolescent girls and boys?			
Do formal service providers, such as teachers, health workers, police, social workers, or counselors, have the capacity to identify, report, and respond to cases of abuse, violence, and exploitation? If not, why?			
Are there linkages between the traditional informal and formal structures, groups, systems, and processes?			
If so, describe them.			
If not, why?			

What methods might be appropriate?

As recommended in Guidance Note 1 regarding methods and approaches, using multiple methods will help you to build a greater understanding of community capacities, resources, and CP risks. Factors in each context will shape your decisions, but following are some considerations:

- A document review can be used to map formal protection structures and systems, including the legal and normative framework on which they are based.
- Observation can highlight risks in the physical environment, power and gender dynamics present in daily interactions, and customary roles of different groups of people.
- Group discussions generally bring information about capacities and risks, though they may not address particularly sensitive topics and concerns.
- In-depth interviews can create space for discussion of more sensitive subjects than group discussions. Ethical considerations must be strictly observed.

CASE STUDY:

Understanding Existing Community-level Organizations

Background: In April 2019, Plan International conducted a child protection, gender-based violence, and menstrual hygiene management assessment in areas of Mozambique affected by Cyclone Idai and the subsequent floods. In addition to assessing risks and needs of affected boys and girls and their families, Plan International wanted to understand existing protection capacities. In the assessment tools, the technical leads of the assessment added a set of very basic questions to Key Informant Interview questionnaires. Questions asked included:

- Do you have a list of active community organizations/ groups/structures in this site?
- Do you have a list of active women-led organizations/ groups/structures in this site?
- If so:
  - Where do they work?
  - What do they do (what is their expertise)?
  - Are they still active (post-emergency)? If not,what is needed to become active?
  - Who is their main contact?

Where possible, the assessment team visited locations where community actions were taking place or had taken place prior to the crisis.

In one location, a Key Informant told the assessment team about a group of female activists (AJULSID) who walk around at night sharing information with known sex workers about safe sex and distributing condoms. This had been badly affected by the emergency as it was no longer safe for people to move around at night, and they did not have access to contraceptives.

In another location the team learned of an initiative at the local health clinic called Hospital Amigo de Creanza and a sister initiative, Service of Adults and Child Friendship (SAAJ), a specific area of the hospital with supportive youth workers who offer a safe and confidential space for young people to go to access health information and where they can be referred to specialized mental health support if needed. This had been severely affected by the crisis, the space was completely destroyed, and the psychologist was displaced from the area.

Location:

Mozambique

Date:

2019

Citation:

Shaphren, A. (2019). *Understanding existing community-level organizations.* Plan International.

This type of information at the beginning of the project cycle created an opportunity to design interventions and proposals that would build back existing community actions, rather than developing parallel structures that did not meet the needs of children and community members. In addition, this type of questioning during the first encounters with community members created a positive connection between affected people, and Plan International, as Key Informants, were proud to share pre-existing strategies to protecting children and to engage in a meaningful discussion about what would be needed to get back to pre-emergency (or better) conditions.

"It was amazing to learn of all the community-level activists, responding already to the issues their community faced – all they needed was a little support to get back on their feet."

– Assessment Team Leader

Analyzing your findings

Using multiple methods will provide you with a lot of information that you will use to better understand risk, protection, structures, capacities, and resources in the community. Some information may be conflicting, representing different perspectives and experiences of informants. It is important to understand why these differences exist to verify accuracy and better understand community dynamics.

When you return to your questions, you will look for themes emerging that can guide you in the next steps to engaging with the community. Broadly speaking, you can begin to explore:

- Who in the community should be involved in CP efforts (e.g., natural helpers, traditional leaders, authorities, opinion leaders)?
- What structures, services, and capacities are already functional that can be supported and not undermined by the establishment of new programming?
- If the emergency has altered pre-existing capacities and resources, how can you meaningfully support their strengthening?
    - What are the concerns about children's risk and protection, and why are these issues?

Who should be involved?

Mapping is key to a context analysis and should involve, as representative, a sample of the community. Understanding the formal CP system means understanding the community perceptions of it as much as how it functions. Children, youth, and adults will likely have different experiences and perspectives that they bring to the questions you are asking, and it is important to understand why there are those differences. Men and women will bring differing perspectives. People who are excluded from decision-making roles, which may include ethnic or religious minorities, people with disabilities, and economically marginalized people, have important insights that must be sought.

As you plan the process of information collection, build in a strategy for ensuring adequate representation in your work. Revisit the plan regularly to update or adapt it as needed.

It is important here to highlight the ethics of community participatory action discussed in Guidance Note 1. Everyone you engage in the process of developing a deep context analysis is giving you something valuable—their time, knowledge, wisdom, experience, etc. Sometimes this comes at some potential risk to them, be it disclosing vulnerability or trauma, or the act of simply speaking with an outsider. Planning must factor this in. At a minimum, commit to feeding back your findings to the community for validation and to hear their viewpoints.

How can you ensure your programming supports these processes?

Mapping and analysis activities can be time consuming and resource intensive, depending on the level in which they are undertaken. Build them into program design as an ongoing activity and ensure a budget for staff time, transport, and other needed resources. They should also be part of your M&E framework. To make this budgeting possible, advocate the importance of these activities with donors.

It is best to undertake these mapping exercises in coordination with other agencies so communities are not responding to the same questions multiple times. This can be distressing for participants and cause "assessment fatigue." It is also important that you share your findings within the CP coordination group to inform the overall planning for CP preparedness or response.

While the methods and tools used are simple to learn, to be used effectively they require a complex set of "soft skills," such as patience, humility, and active listening. Prioritize staff recruitment and development to focus on these relevant skills. For more discussion on the programmatic elements, please refer to Guidance Note 11.

CASE STUDY:

Seeking the Strengths: Faith-based Child Protection Networks in Afghanistan

Background: Afghanistan is recognized as one of the most fragile states globally. Government investment in family welfare and social protection is minimal. There are significant gender disparities in decision making from household through to government levels, as well as low levels of education and literacy. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) State of the World's Children, over 70% of households believe it is appropriate to beat women, and 75% use violent discipline on children. Approximately 35% of girls are married before the age of 18, and 9% are married by 15.

Programmatic response: World Vision Afghanistan worked with respected local authorities (i.e., religious and community leaders, teachers, and district-level civil society organizations) to map responsibilities and needs of local child protection (CP) actors using a standard tool, CP-ADAPT. The data revealed communities consistently recognized faith leaders as the most stable and influential authorities in community life. Based on this, partnership with faith leaders became the basis of attitudinal change efforts.

Two core community engagement methodologies, "Community Change" and "Celebrating Families," use community dialogue facilitated by religious leaders to enable their congregations to explore the underlying beliefs, sociocultural norms, and traditional practices that either challenge or support local progress toward improving children's well-being. This empowers community members to develop their own plans and personal commitment toward social change.

Results for systems and children: Once the value of community dialogue was recognized to reduce violence and family disputes, demand grew to repeat the program's outside original target areas using other authoritative voices, such as local councils or shuras, and teachers. Engaging mullahs and imams to facilitate community discussions on the root causes of anger and violence in the home proved to be successful. Mullahs reported the focus of their interaction with children and the family unit changed significantly as a result of the interventions, as did their own ideas about power, authority, and gender within family and community.

Location:

Afghanistan

Date:

2019

Citation:

Adapted from World Vision. (2019). *Seeking the strengths: Faith-based child protection networks in Afghanistan.*

Once communities learned of the reduction in violence against children in the home, they were more willing to act on CP issues. End-line evaluation of one Celebrating Families project showed a remarkable reduction in children's self-reported family violence, from 96% to 14%. While children in the local community still reported nearly the same levels of exposure to violence, the frequency had decreased.

Conclusions and challenges: Over the last decade World Vision has worked to promote safe and nurturing family environments through faith-based outreach from different actors. The initiatives have connected well with the district-level formal authority for CP, the Child Protection Action Network. While network members are encouraged, they continue to face capacity and budget allocation challenges, which reflects not only the fragility of the context, but also the low priority afforded to family welfare within limited State resources. Communities often lacked the funds to continue with their CP strengthening action plans. Community-based protection now needs local advocacy and accountability to reduce reliance on international funds, an approach that World Vision Afghanistan has recently introduced to strengthen the sustainability and success of CP networks.

World Vision has showed me that I can use my influence to advocate for children. I replicate the knowledge from their classes in my village. I want to make sure all children are able to get an education and that no child will be married off. I am a father of six myself.

– Mullah and facilitator of Community Change, Herat

GUIDANCE NOTE 4:

How to Identify Risks Associated with External Support

Introduction

In humanitarian action it is critical that you ensure that your work does not have negative consequences on the communities with which you are consulting. The presence of humanitarian actors has the potential to fuel tensions, negatively affect power dynamics, and contribute to other unintended results that may cause harm. In addition to the potential risks to a community, external actors bring perspectives, viewpoints, and behaviors that may have implications on their work, as well as how they are perceived and engage with communities.

Taking time to reflect on the potential risks associated with an external actor's presence in a community can ensure you "Do No Harm."

When does this happen?

You should begin thinking through these concepts as soon as possible at both an internal level (within your agency) and with key stakeholders in the community. This will be a priority during the preparedness phase of action, though it is important at all stages. It is a best practice to consider the changing environment and to revisit the impact of your (and other external actors') presence.

Conflict-sensitive approaches

> *A conflict-sensitive approach involves gaining a sound understanding of the two-way interaction activities of context and acting to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of intervention on conflict within an agency's given priorities/ objectives (mandate).*[7]

Power dynamics and conflict are not only intra-communal. In humanitarian settings of armed conflict, you should recognize the potential for your own actions, as external actors, to cause or exacerbate tension or conflict within communities, and/or between yourselves and community members. The core principle of "Do No Harm" necessitates you taking all measures to ensure your programming does not contribute to fueling divisions that may already be present or create new ones, even if unintentionally. The fundamental conflict-sensitive approaches are not a lot different from what is prioritized in this Reflective Field Guide: developing a good understanding of the context, analyzing the sources of tensions/divisions and capacities for cohesion, analyzing your programming and its potential impacts (positive and negative) on the context, and piloting and adapting programming according to risk analyses.

Humanitarian assistance can exacerbate conflict[8] and is at risk of becoming an instrument of war – at the local level through the manipulation of aid resources by warlords and at the global level through feeding partisan political interests. In some particularly complex situations, external interventions are limited to humanitarian assistance. In the absence of sustained development or peacebuilding interventions, the potentially negative impact of such humanitarian assistance is far greater – heightening the need for conflict sensitivity.

Many humanitarian agencies are increasingly aware of the risks of their interventions exacerbating conflict, and some have been developing methodologies and mechanisms for addressing this.

Where to start?

As part of your context analysis in Guidance Note 3, you will examine the role of external actors in the overall CP system. Using the guidance provided in the work "Adapting to Learn, Learning to Adapt,"[9] ask yourself a series of questions:

1. Who plays a leading role in the protection of children in the affected community?
2. What is the role of external actors in this community?
3. How have they strengthened the system? How have they weakened it?
4. How have they worked with the leading player (positively/negatively)? How have they ensured they do not take over leadership?
5. What are the community's, State's, local NGOs', community-based organizations' (CBOs), religious leaders', families', and children's expectations of your agency?

What do you want to learn?

You may choose to analyze the above questions through a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats (SCOT) tool. You can use this tool with key stakeholders within the community, as well as to validate your thinking, challenge your perceptions, and provide you with guidance on how to mitigate challenges.

This sample template may be used to reflect on potential risks you (as an external actor) may pose in the community. Ensure you validate your findings with key stakeholders in the community. The below questions are adapted from the "Adapting to Learn, Learning to Adapt" [10] resource.

SCOT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats (SCOT) Analysis Tool

SCOT Template	
Team Members:	
Location:	
Date:	

Strengths: What things do you (as an external actor) bring to the community-level response?

1. What role has your organization played within systems before the humanitarian event? What role has it played since the emergency (whether it was present before the event or established after)?
2. What role can you play in protecting children directly? What is the added value of your agency's presence? And how can this be integrated into the existing system in the most positive way?
3. What skills do your staff team have in working with communities?
4. How can you be fully accountable to community members.

Challenges: Where do you lack understanding, influence, and ability to access or communicate where you will need support or community buy-in?

1. What are the ways in which your presence may weaken the child protection system? How may these issues be avoided?
2. Who are the staff working for your agency? Are they representative of the population and children you are working with? What culture, language, ethnic, socioeconomic, political, religious, ability, or other groups within society do they and should they represent?
3. Do your staff have the necessary soft skills to collaborate and work respectfully with actors at various levels within the system?

Opportunities: Where are there opportunities for external actors to add value to the response (without compromising, duplicating, or undermining existing protective structures)?

How will you ensure that you support the work being done by the community to protect children?

Threats: Where do you need to be careful or proceed with caution (e.g., certain subjects that may be taboo, characteristics of staff that can pose a threat to the community)?

How do other actors – from family and community all the way to State actors and regional bodies – within the existing systems perceive external actors?

How may the balance of power influence relationships and ways of working?

How will you ensure that the external actors contribute to the existing systems and respect what exists, rather than dominating, duplicating, or ignoring existing structures and mechanisms? What can you do to understand the background of your own staff so as to recognize any bias in their perception of the child protection system(s) and limitations to their role within the system(s)?	Is it possible that the team you have would reinforce discrimination in any way?
What can you do to understand the background of your own staff so as to recognize any bias in their perception of the child protection system(s) and limitations to their role within the system(s)?	What are your own pre-conceived ideas that may limit your ability to understand systems and actors in new contexts? Are you weakening State, local, or community structures by recruiting all their most qualified staff? Do your benefits packages distort or affect local salary scales? Are there key staff you may retain or employ in senior positions to guide the work who have a good understanding of the context and the system(s)? Not all long-term staff operating at certain levels within any systems will have a positive impact or relationship within the systems. How will you confirm their role within the systems before taking this approach?
SCOT Analysis	
How can you leverage your Strengths to take advantage of the Opportunities identified?	

Integrate your SCOT into programming

Remember that the SCOT analysis is meant to support your decision making when entering a community. Make sure that this feeds back into your project design and that mitigating measures are taken to ensure the safety and well-being of staff, community members, and children you work with.

The template may be adapted or incorporated into your organization's Emergency Preparedness Planning process.

GUIDANCE NOTE 5:

Understanding Community Conceptions of Child Protection

Introduction

In the field of humanitarian CP, CP actors have been working with more or less standardized terminology and definitions of the key concepts in their work. These are heavily influenced by rights-based and social service models grounded in the Global North. As you look more closely at how to more effectively work as external actors across many cultural settings, it becomes clear that these terms do not always reflect the local understandings of these same concepts in the community.

A growing body of evidence of what contributes to effective community-level engagement suggests you reflect on how your language shapes your programming, and the potential influences (positive and negative) it has in your community engagement. Increasingly, you will see that the terminology you use is not recognized by community members or aligned with their understandings. This is not only in relation to technical CP terms, but also "community," "community-based protection," "family," "child," "child development," etc. In addition, CP actors tend to work in a few dominant languages that many in communities do not speak. Most of the global guidance, such as this, are developed in English, and translations tend to be those dominant languages and not local languages that field staff would be working in.

Research has shown that effective and sustainable programs build on community understandings of child development, protection, risk, and related concepts. This is reflected in the revised CPMS Standard 17. As these considerations influence your work, you need to reflect on how you can build in processes that help you to appreciate community understanding and, importantly, build shared understandings that can inform more effective CCP.

Where do you begin?

You might begin by thinking about how you communicate when you are working on CP at the community-level.

- Do you use NGO jargon, which often includes acronyms that only humanitarian workers might understand?
- Do you use technical terms that might be unfamiliar to non-specialists?
- You have CP priorities in your actions (e.g., child labor, unaccompanied and separated children, psychosocial support), but are those understood in the same ways by different members of the community?

If this is the case, you should reflect on how this could influence your interactions with community members:

- Is it possible you will not be understood (and you may not realize that)?
- Does your communication make your interactions more or less inclusive?
- Will you be developing programming that is truly grounded in community understandings of CP-related concerns or those that are framed by your understandings?

When you examine the possible communication dynamics, you will begin to see that you can put up barriers to meaningful community engagement without realizing it.

> ***Terminology used by staff to describe risks that children face, actions to mitigate those risks, and available services are not always contextualized to the appropriate language and concepts of affected people. This terminology can alienate and, in some cases, can remove affected people from technical and strategic discussions about what risks their children face, what can be done to address those risks, and how it should be implemented. The importance of language and terminology cannot be underestimated. It can affect the way you communicate with and are understood by one another; it can lead to unintended power dynamics, exclusion of certain groups, the creation of a perceived sense of disrespect, and lead to the design of interventions that undermine existing protective practices in communities.[11]***

Changing your approach

This Reflective Field Guide has stressed the need for and approaches to gaining a deeper understanding of the various elements in the community context that influence risk and protection. This is done through participatory approaches to community engagement that emphasize openness, listening, respect, and learning, and promote self-reliance and ownership. These are fundamental to all your efforts in effective and sustainable CCP.

Developing common understandings of CP-related concepts is part of the deep context analysis to help you understand what shapes community thinking about risk and protection. As with Guidance Note 2 and Guidance Note 3, you begin by clarifying what it is you want to understand and then how best to learn. This process is interactive and allows you to work together with community members to understand CP-related concepts that influence programming, including in community-level capacity-building actions.

Guiding questions

Below are some guiding questions that may help you frame your learning outcomes. This is not an exhaustive list. These may differ from context to context, so you should consider the key aspects of how CP concepts are understood in your community.

Reminder: These questions are not intended to be asked directly (as in a survey). They frame the learning process by identifying what you want to know about as you engage with the community.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY CONCEPTS OF CHILD PROTECTION

Developing core questions on what you want to explore is important in structuring your mapping and analysis. Some illustrative questions are presented below to help you begin to think about what is important to understand in your context. This is not an exhaustive list.

These are not intended to be used as questionnaires or surveys, but to prioritize the kinds of information you want to gather to design your interventions. All information should be disaggregated by gender and age groups (e.g., 5 years and under; 6-11 years; 12-17 years).

Guiding Questions to Understand Community Concepts of Child Protection	Have these changed with the emergency? Describe.
How does the community define “child”? (Note if it is by age, developmental status, other.)	
Is it the same for boys and girls? If not, how?	
Does this differ across any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
How is the developmental process understood and defined (e.g., roles, responsibilities, expectations, rites of passage)?	
Is it the same for boys and girls? If not, how?	
Does this differ across any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
How is the concept of “youth” understood (if there is a developmental stage of youth)?	
Is it the same for boys and girls? If not, how?	
Does this differ across any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
How is “well-being” of boys and girls understood (e.g., what does that “look” like)?	

How is “child protection” understood?	
What are the protective elements in the community (probe for formal and informal systems, people, structures, processes such as religious and traditional practices, etc.)?	
Do children influence their own protection? If yes, how?	
What are considered “harms” to children?	
How is “risk” for children understood?	
What are risk factors in the community (probe for formal and informal systems, people, structures, processes such as religious and traditional practices, physical spaces, etc.)?	
Are there risks and harms to children that are difficult to discuss or address? If so, which? Why?	
What are the common parenting/caregiving practices in the community (describe)…	
For children without parents/caregivers?	
Are there different practices for boys and girls?	
Do these differ between any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
How are relationships between adults and children defined (e.g., roles, expectations, dynamics in the family and in the community)?	
Are these different for boys and girls?	
Are these different in kinship care, or other forms of alternative care?	
Do these differ between any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
Do these influence child protection?	
How are relationships between adults and youth understood (e.g., roles, expectations, dynamics)?	

Are these different for boys and girls?	
Do these differ between any social, ethnic, religious, or other groups?	
Do these influence child protection?	
Others to Add for Your Context:	

What will you do with this information?

Consolidating this information is important as you expand the context analysis in preparation for action planning with community members (Guidance Note 7). Ethically, it is important to feed the information back to the community in a friendly, understandable way without jargon. This is a respectful process that enables a level of validation, and can set the stage for reflection by the local people about what they would like to do. Establishing a shared and agreed-upon understanding of protection concepts, and the concerns that may be addressed, is important in giving community members a sense of ownership in the process.

Challenges

One of the main challenges you may face is learning that local understandings of CP may not be in line with child rights programming. For example, local social and cultural norms may influence what are seen to be protective responses that prioritize family and community cohesion over the individual rights of children.

A community-level approach to CP assumes that these cultural and social norms are dynamic and can change. It promotes dialogue that contributes to facilitating social change. This does not mean supporting actions that are violations of children or the law; all your actions should be consistent with child rights. Experience has shown, however, that child rights language may not be understood by community members in the same way as it is by humanitarian actors. However, by facilitating dialogue around these issues, you will probably see that there are differing perspectives within the community and space to consider other possibilities that are in line with the child rights framework.

CASE STUDY:

Community Management of Child Friendly Spaces

The Government of Uganda has been hosting South Sudanese refugees since 2003, and their Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework is one of the most liberal refugee policies in the world. Most refugees live in large settlements across Uganda where they are provided with a small plot of agricultural land. Most refugees in Uganda are from South Sudan, and the ongoing conflict in South Sudan has resulted in a continuous influx of refugees making the number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda more than one million according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Ugandan NGO, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), has involved the community in making and facilitating Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs). TPO has established eight CFSs – large brick buildings, a playground, football and netball fields, and toilets inside a fence – what everyone calls "the compound." The buildings are brightly painted by a local artist and have been stocked with basic learning material for young children and with games and books for older children.

The TPO CFSs are busy and happy places and are used as a formal Early Childhood Development center, playground, games, crafts, and discussion; some centers also run income-generating activities for children not in school. Social workers at the center can refer a child or parents to a clinical psychologist employed by TPO for individual therapy, and a psychologist runs group therapy sessions for children and adults. For those needing less specialized support, the social worker can conduct individual counseling in the home with the help of local community volunteers or Center Management Committee (Committee) members who have been elected by community leaders and confirmed through community meetings.

Committee members are always moving through the community and help children that need it. Members play an important role in the CFS. One key role they play is ensuring the centers are inclusive. In the context of inclusivity, ethnic inclusivity is central in the South Sudanese settlement.

Location:

Uganda, South Sudan

Date:

2018

Citation:

Adapted from: Clacherty, G. (2018). *Community Management of Child Friendly Spaces Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, Uganda: A Case study*. Community Child Protection Exchange and TPO Uganda.

At first, children said the center was for the Nuers – the Dinkas would not come here – but Committee members moved around door to door and explained that the center is not for Nuers or for Dinkas, but for every child. Every child is treated the same; over time, children of many ethnicities were coming to the center, playing football, and becoming friends. Committee members see the centers themselves as spaces for building peace; children will learn from a very young age to get along with each other and will develop different attitudes to promote peace.

"With the Centre Management Committee, you get the trust of the community. Sometimes parents may not come directly to us (as social workers), but they can go to the members of the Centre Management Committe because they are from the community. If you don't involve parents, you put this wall up, but we cannot always get parents to come to meetings if we call them. But the Centre Management Committees they are there – they are always moving in the community – they know what is happening – so they are allowing you to get to know the community, and the children get the benefit."

– Anna, Social Worker, Cluster NCFS

GUIDANCE NOTE 6:

Prioritizing Community Child Protection Concerns

Introduction

When you have completed the mapping of CP risks and concerns, you may have many CP issues that are of concern to community members. Concerns may vary across different groups in the community; for instance, children and adults, girls and boys, women and men, or different community leaders. Realistically, not all CP concerns can be addressed in your community-level programming. Prioritizing those risks that community members agree are important and feasibly addressed with the mobilization of their resources, along with your support, is an important step in meaningful community engagement.

Focusing on the priorities of community members and involving them in developing contextually appropriate responses to them:

- Gives further insight into how community members view CP risks and resources
- Is a critical first step in the action planning process (see Guidance Note 9)
- Can lead to sustainable efforts because the process can:
    - Increase a sense of ownership
    - Foster agency, dignity and self-reliance
    - Motivate the effective mobilization of resources and collective action

The process of selecting which harms to address will itself be the foundation of community ownership, but only if there are a sufficiently diverse group of participants and there is enough discussion and exploration of different harms to elicit deep concern and a sense of responsibility by the group. The following methods should only be used along with ongoing dialogue and discussion within the community. It is also important to assess factors that may suggest these methods are not appropriate, for example, they often represent the views of the dominant voices in the community, leaving important voices silent; they tend not to highlight very sensitive issues, which are important but difficult to speak about openly.

It is critical to stress that, as with any of the processes described in these Guidance Notes, these are not one-off activities. They are possible tools to use in the context of ongoing dialogue that can foster community decision-making.

Methods

The same methods outlined in Guidance Note 1 and Guidance Note 8, which you have used to map risks and resources, involve children, and explore risks of external involvement, can be used to prioritize. Participative listing and ranking is one of the primary approaches for groups to work through concerns presented through your community engagement and then come to an agreement on those that are most appropriate to address. The strength of these methods is that participants play a leading role in prioritizing what is most important to them, which can lead to practical action. This can impart a sense of motivation and lead to increased buy-in during follow-up meetings and planned action. The sample below outlines a process for participatory ranking exercises.

Participatory Listing and Ranking: Documentation Template

Introduction

Ranking exercises are group discussions that include lively methods of learning about opinions and priorities of community members regarding CP risks, as well as some of the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs related to children's well-being. There are several different listing and ranking (or "ranking and scoring") methods. One of these is presented below. For additional resources on participatory methodologies, see Part 5: Terminology and Resources.

The strength of these methods is that participants play a leading role in prioritizing what is most important to them and can lead to practical action. This can impart a sense of motivation and ownership of the outcomes, as well as buy-in to follow up with a planned action.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Documentation Template

Sample Template

Ensure that informed consent has been given, preferably in writing, before beginning the interview.

Introduction

Make a brief introduction to the purpose and subject of the group discussion (key points). It is recommended that you write these out like a script so that you are confident facilitating the discussion.

1. Who you are (e.g., My name is _____, and I work with X agency, which supports communities to keep children safe).
2. The reason for the group discussion: to collectively identify and prioritize issues affecting them.
3. What to expect:
    a. Length of time (30 minutes)
    b. Consent to have a notetaker and recording (if applicable)
    c. What you will do with the information gathered (including notes and recordings)
    d. Assurance they can stop or leave at any point
4. Materials needed: Sticky cards/notes, pens, dot stickers, and masking tape

Process

1. From the discussions identified through the Body Map, help the participants to list each issue on a sticky card and put it up on the board. Combine similar issues into one concept if necessary. Try not to exceed more than 10-15 issues. Ask:
    a. What are the main CP risks/sources of harm that children face, in general, in this community?
2. Once you have all the issues listed on the wall, hand out three dot stickers to each participant.
3. Explain that all participants will be invited to the front to place a dot on the issue that they think is the most important issue to address. The dot represents one of their votes, and each person has three votes (three stickers).
4. Invite participants to complete the exercise.

Note: If some participants have trouble reading, you may wish to draw out the issues in pictures instead. Facilitators should support these participants to cast their votes.

Discussion questions

After the votes are cast, bring the group back together and identify the issues with the most votes. Ask participants:

1. What are the consequences of these issues on your lives?
2. What role can adolescents and young people play in responding to these issues?
3. What is the role of your families/communities?
4. What is the role of organizations/government?

Ranking and Listing Exercise Results

Question for discussion: What are the most important child protection concerns in your community?

Free listing Results (up to 7 or 8)	Ranking Results
Child labor	1.
School dropout	2.
Early marriage	3.
	4.
	5.
	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.

The notetaker will write detailed notes, including observation of participants' interaction, and (with consent) audio record the interview. As soon as possible after the interview, type up the verbatim notes in their entirety according to the question (if they followed the questions). You will return to your key questions and see what information you gained related to them. This can be put in a simple table, as shown below, or on a spreadsheet.

Question	Responses
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Additional comments:	
Observations:	
Comments about the process for shared learning:	

Closing: Thank everyone for their time and support and explain the next steps in the process. Considerations: As with any group discussion format, there are some considerations to keep in mind as you plan and facilitate the prioritization process.

- Representative participation: Work to ensure that you are involving a broad representation of community members—including children, youth, women, elderly adults, persons with disabilities, low socio-economic status, and others who may not always have a voice in decision making. It is important, however, to recognize that the most vulnerable people are often not able to attend these activities, and many may be reluctant to speak up about sensitive issues.
- Representatives of CP service providers and institutions, such as educators, health workers, day care centers, traditional leaders, social and civic organizations, etc., will also bring critical perspectives that are often absent but broaden and deepen analysis. To do this may require adapting the methods and tools to be appropriate and accessible to differing abilities and needs.
- Criteria for decision making: There are probably several factors that can influence which CP concerns should be prioritized. This is an important first step to undertake with community members before the prioritization process. The aim of this step is to weigh the different considerations around most important CP risks, and the feasibility of community-led action to address them.
- Consider:
    - The community's perception of the issue's importance
    - The probability of meaningfully addressing the issues
    - The frequency of the issues
    - The scope of impact across the community
    - The cost of the issue to the community (e.g., financial, social)
    - The resources needed to address the issue adequately (internal and external)
    - The readiness of the community to recognize and address the issue
    - The long-term impact of the issue
    - The long-term benefit of your support

- For external actors: the fit of addressing the issue with your agency's vision, mission, mandate, and programming/funding priorities; the possibility of an intervention causing unintended negative consequences

Challenges

Participatory prioritization of CP risks for action planning can face a number of challenges relating to group process, scope of CP concerns, and programmatic constraints. The better you have come to understand the context, the more prepared you will be to address these challenges. In planning your activities, consider what challenges might arise and how you may mitigate them.

Lack of consensus

Community engagement is most effective when it is guided by community members themselves and reflects their collective concerns and wishes of community members.
The approaches discussed in Guidance Note 2 emphasize building consensus through effective communication strategies and sensitivity to power dynamics and conflict. They recognize that this can take time, often a long time. This can be challenging in the humanitarian setting in which program cycles are often short.

Some considerations for consensus building in CCP are:

- Recognize that much of the discussion will consist of exploring different points of view. Finding common ground and building consensus around important issues happens outside of the processes you will be engaged in. They happen informally, in households, between neighbors, at gatherings, etc. Learn how disagreements are handled in the cultural context and build on those organic processes.
- Emphasize skill-building in the methods and approaches outlined in Guidance Note 2 with your CP workforce. These can also contribute to stronger consensus building within your agency.
- To the extent possible, take a longer term perspective in your planning at the outset of your programming, advocating for the need to allow community members to work toward collective decision making and action.

Scope of CP concerns

Your context analysis will likely reveal that some of the most pressing CP concerns are rooted in larger issues beyond the scope of CP programming; for example, economic vulnerabilities, social or political unrest, or harmful social norms. Humanitarian CP actors may well face constraints in addressing what community members feel to be the most critical concerns due to agency mandate, targeted funds, timeframes, etc. There are no easy solutions to these challenges, but they do highlight the needs for transparency, sectoral integration, and flexible programming approaches in community-level engagement.

- Be transparent at the beginning of your community engagement, with clarity about your mandate and programming priorities, and any constraints you may face in supporting community-led action.
- If your funding is tied to particular issues, involve community members in prioritizing and taking decisions on how to address the harms. Explore the possibility of mobilizing modest funds for some actions that community members would like to lead on.
- Advocate for flexible funding that emphasizes outcome-oriented results, with adaptable approaches that can be tailored to different and changing contexts.
- Make efforts to link with other actors who may be able to address those issues that are beyond the scope of your work.
- Integrate CP in the programming of other sectors—within your own agency or in collaboration with others.

CASE STUDY:

Engaging Communities in Reducing Child Protection Risks During Crisis and Disasters Project

The humanitarian context in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains hostile with chronic crisis, armed groups, Ebola and cholera outbreaks, active volcanoes, and drought. In the DRC, the Bureau d'Informations, Formations, Echanges et Recherches pour le Dévelopment (BIFERD), a national NGO working in North Kivu province, consulted with families and communities to identify child protection risks.

Together, they identified that out-of-school children were more at risk to kidnapping by armed groups in remote areas. Community members suggested providing education for out-of-school children and to empower families to build peace and security. Local leaders, community organizations, and BIFERD collaborated with each other to identify appropriate approaches to addressing this concern.

In Rutshuru Territory, BIFERD worked together with local youth groups from different churches to promote child and youth rights. Youth encouraged church-goers to collect small amounts of money, which eventually paid the school fees of 40 vulnerable out-of-school children.

Location:

Democratic Republic of Congo

Date:

2019

Citation:

Adapted from: Habimana, J. (2019). *Engaging Communities in Reducing Child Protection Risks during Crisis and Disasters Project*. BIFERD.

Conclusion

A meaningful process to involve community members in prioritizing their CP concerns is an important first step in mobilizing action and resources in the development of action plans to address these concerns. Guidance Note 7 will outline approaches to those processes.

GUIDANCE NOTE 7:

How to Support Meaningful Child Participation

Introduction

Children have made significant and valuable contributions in humanitarian contexts. They have taken on roles and responsibilities that save their lives as well as the lives of their peers and families. Children have participated in distributing relief, caring for children and adults, and offering a hand in psychosocial support, health and hygiene education, reconstruction, planning, and evaluating emergency relief work. The activities and achievements of children demonstrate why their participation is of value to them, their families, and their communities, as well as to relief and recovery work. Although children and young people have less social (and often physical) power, their contributions in humanitarian settings are significant and crucial to the survival of their families and communities.

Child participation

"Meaningful participation" recognizes that girls and boys have agency to analyze their situation, express their views, influence decisions that affect them, and achieve change. This includes the informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalized and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them directly or indirectly.

The principle of child participation, enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 12, cuts across all programs and takes place in all arenas, from homes to government and from local to international levels.

Child participation can take many different forms, with varying levels of involvement and decision making. It can range from tokenism to child-led action. This continuum is often illustrated as a ladder, though that can imply linear movement up through steps in a hierarchy. What is meaningful participation is influenced by many factors, including sociocultural norms, the particular humanitarian situation, capacities, resources, etc. Your analysis of the context will inform to what extent consultation, shared decision making, or child-initiated actions are meaningful participation.

When does this happen?

In emergency contexts, ethical concerns may arise regarding the potential "harm" of involving children in programs. It is crucial that the principles of "best interests" and "do no harm" are applied when determining how and when to support children's participation. Every context is unique and requires a good understanding of the local context (see Guidance Note 3). It may not be appropriate to involve children in all contexts. Risk assessments are required to inform decision making about when children's participation is appropriate.[12] They typically consider:

- What are the benefits to children's participation in this activity, what are the potential risks/threats for their participation, and how severe is the risk?
- Are you involving the most accessible children, and thereby further stigmatizing or marginalizing the most vulnerable?

- What is the likelihood that these risks will occur? How will you prevent or mitigate them?
- What further action could you take to ensure you do no harm to children?

In any situation where risk assessments indicate that potential harm cannot be properly mitigated, children's participation should not be supported. For more detailed information, see a recent review of the Ethical Considerations for Children's Participation in Data Collection Activities during Humanitarian Emergencies.[13] When planning to engage children in key activities, ensure participation is:

- **Transparent and informative:** Do children have enough information about the program to make an informed decision about whether and how to participate? Is it in a child-friendly format?
- **Voluntary:** Is participation voluntary? Can children withdraw at any time?
- **Respectful:** Are children's commitments (study, play) taken into consideration? Has support from key adults (parents, etc.) been gained?
- **Relevant:** Are the issues discussed relevant to children?
- **Child-friendly:** Are child-friendly approaches/meeting places used? Do the ways of working build the confidence of all children?
- **Inclusive:** Are girls, boys, ages, ethnicity, disabilities, etc., included?
- **Supported by training for adults:** Are staff trained on child rights, safeguarding, participation, child-friendly approaches?
- **Safe and sensitive to risk:** Are the principles of "do no harm" and "best interest" being upheld? Do children feel safe to participate?
- **Accountable:** Are children supposed to participate in the evaluation process? Are their suggestions taken seriously by adults?

CASE STUDY:
A Wake-up Call

In 2004, three municipalities in Quezon Province—Real, Infanta, and General Nakar (REINA)—experienced first-hand the devastating consequences of the deforestation and erosion caused by illegal clearing. After weeks of rain, the area was stuck by Typhoon Nanmadol, the fourth typhoon to hit the Philippines that year. It caused a massive landslide and flash flooding throughout the townships. Cut off from road transportation, relief was slow in arriving. Ships were turned back by large waves carrying logs washed down in the landslide. Some structures were never uncovered.

Young people still speak of the fear and loss they experienced as young children during the disaster. They share that it led them to start examining the risks in their environment and to work proactively to prevent future devastation. These concerns led to the creation of the "Empowering REINA Children, Youth, and Communities to Become Environmental Protectors," implemented by the Child Fund Philippines partner, Reina Federation of Parent Associations, Inc. in 2011. The project trained children and youth to become Eco scouts and work with their communities to address environmental degradation that increases risks in natural disasters. Many activities continued beyond the end of the project in 2014 and have been replicated in other communities. Among these activities:

- Community awareness-raising on environmental issues through various forms of media
- Proactively engaging local authorities to develop environmental protection and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) plans, using data gathering, hazard mapping, and response planning and preparedness
- Developing youth DRM plans for inclusion in barangay DRM plans
- Formulating disaster plans in their homes and communities
- Establishing nurseries and participating in reforestation efforts
- Organizing climate change forums

Location:

Quezon Province, Philippines

Date:

2004

Citation:

Adapted from: Child Fund International. (2016). Children and youth in Disaster Risk Management and child protection: A case study from the Philippines. Washington, DC: Author.

Young people expressed passionately how involvement in these efforts has increased their self-esteem and self-confidence. They speak of how honored they feel in being able to train other youth, and adults, and to see their influence in making their communities more resilient. It was reported that other children and youth consider them role models, and that is very meaningful to them.What makes me resilient?

“The experience we get in this organization. When I started, I was 9 or 10. I was so, so shy; too shy to share my opinion. And here I am talking in front of you! Sharing about children’s rights and responsibilities.”

– 18-year-old male, former Eco Scout, and Youth Association Member, Reina Federation.

Where to start?

Children are the best resource when trying to understand the issues that most affect them, their coping mechanisms, the people that support them, and existing capacities. They are invaluable to designing and implementing effective community-led CP programming.

> ***Children themselves play a role as agents of transformation. Children have the right to be heard, to express opinions on matters that affect them, and to access information, while respecting the roles and responsibilities of parents and others in authority. When children learn to communicate opinions, take responsibility, and make decisions, they are prepared for improved academic performance and good citizenship.[14]***

If it is appropriate and safe to do so, engaging children early in the work with community members can help children become valued participants and agents of change. Their participation can ensure community members hear about the realities and risks that children face on a day-to-day basis, what support they need, and, when ready to act, they can become leaders of the community action.[15] There are many participatory tools and methodologies available to support children's participation. A key resource providing many participatory methodologies can be found in Module 4 of the ARC Resource Pack.[16] Below is a sample of some participatory tools:

Tool	Purpose	Project Cycle
Community Mapping (see Community Mapping: Documentation Template)	Undertake a risk map with girls and boys to recognize how a risk map can be a useful tool with children to identify risks affecting girls and boys of different ages and background in their local community and appreciate how children can use the risk map as an action planning and advocacy tool to influence action on protection issues affecting them.	Assessment
Power Ball	To analyze current power relations within the family, community, camp, and/or child organization (e.g., power, gender, disability, and other forms of discrimination) and to visualize ideal power relations; for example, what the ideal distribution of power is between children (girls and boys, rich and poor, with or without disabilities).	Assessment
Body Mapping	Use the body map tool to get a better understanding of girls' and boys' views and experiences of the different ways in which an emergency has affected their lives; analyze and record disaggregated information concerning the experiences of girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds in different contexts.	Assessment
How? How? How?	Identify actions to be taken to further promote and support children's participation and rights (e.g., with children and youth clubs).	Planning

Visioning and Next Steps	Create space for children to dream their vision of their future and identify practical steps to move toward the vision.	Planning
Circle of Influence	To identify which people or institutions have a responsibility to act to better protect and fulfill children's rights (including children's participation rights) at different levels and to identify various actions that should be taken by different people.	Implementation
Peace or Recovery Albums	Encourage child-led documentation, peacebuilding, and advocacy participation. Document children's views and experiences. Show that children's voices and contributions toward problem-solving are important.	Implementation
Circle Analysis of Inclusion and Exclusion	Explore issues of inclusion and exclusion in a given context by helping children identify and discuss which girls and boys (from which age groups or backgrounds) are most actively involved or excluded from organizations or activities. Explore children's or young people's ideas about how programs can be more inclusive.	Implementation
Personal Goal	To understand whether and how the program has helped children to progress toward achieving their goals.	Monitoring
H Assessment	Measure with children how the humanitarian response has been going, what is going well, what is problematic, and the potential solutions to better meet the needs.	Monitoring
Happy and Sad Face Evaluation	To evaluate the strong and weak points of a single activity, workshop, or program (e.g., CFS recreational activities, a life skills module, or a training) and identify improvements. To identify strong and weak aspects of a training or workshop and to identify improvements or alternatives.	Evaluation

GUIDANCE NOTE 8:
Action Planning with Communities

Introduction

Through the process of learning about the emergency context, how the affected community understands key protection concepts, and the in-depth work done when mapping the protection capacities and risks to children alongside community members, and particularly children themselves, external actors can slowly build trust with community members and individuals who provide traditional mechanisms of protection. As stated in the Guide and Toolkit for Supporting a Community-led Approach to Child Protection, this reflective process can often lead community members to ask themselves, "What are we going to do about these harms to children?"; and to agency workers, "Will you continue to support us?"[17] This Guidance Note offers an approach that will help you have an honest conversation with community members that attempts to address these key questions.

When does this happen?

You should begin planning action alongside community members after you have taken the time to understand the protection capacities and risks within the community. This is effectively done as prevention, in preparedness actions anticipating CP concerns, as well as in response phases. In protracted emergencies these processes can serve as both preparedness and response actions.

Action planning begins with a Mapping and Context Analysis, as described in Guidance Note 3 and Guidance Note 4. The analysis, in addition to discussions about local understandings of key protection concepts (Guidance Note 5); the collective work to identify risks children face in the community; and the prioritization of those risks by community members will naturally lead to a trusting relationship and generate an energy to address these concerns. It is now a great opportunity to begin planning for a joint response.

> ***In participatory action research and community mobilization approaches, local groups of people collectively identify a problem of concern and then mobilize themselves to plan, implement, and evaluate an intervention to address the problem. This approach generates high levels of community ownership since it is the community that defines the problem and manages or runs the intervention. In this approach, the community holds the power and makes the key decisions about which problem to address, what steps to take in addressing it, how to organize itself to implement the intervention, whom to partner with and how, and so on.***[18]

CASE STUDY:

Working Alongside Communities, Malakal Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)/Protection of Civilians (PoC) Camp

When conflict broke out in 2013 between government and opposition forces in Malakal Town, South Sudan, Upper Nile State, thousands of civilians fled to the United Nations Peace Keeping Force base (UN MISS) at the outskirts of Malakal Town seeking protection. The Protection of Civilian (PoC) camp was established in 2014 to host IDPs who felt unsafe under local government forces.

As part of strengthening community-level protection structures, War Child Holland engaged with community leaders and representatives to build their leadership capacity and improve their understanding around child protection (CP) risks in the PoC and help them to recognize community capacity to deal with protection issues and find out local solutions. Community leaders were provided training and assisted to organize monthly meetings to continuously engage them on CP and psychosocial support activities.

One of the examples of activities carried out by trained community leaders and representatives was identification of extremely vulnerable children in the PoC and looking for local solutions to sustainably support such children. Through a joint community and War Child Holland exercise, seven returnee children needing care were identified living with their grandparents. As community leaders looked for long-term arrangements, they mobilized neighboring caregivers to feed the children and managed to send them to school. A War Child Holland Case Worker conducted weekly visits to the children and facilitated initial support for the family, including three months' cash support, school uniforms for children, and linking the family with the World Food Program for food assistance.

Location:

South Sudan

Date:

2013

Citation:

Adapted from: Yohannes, Z. (2019). Working alongside Communities, Malakal Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)/ Protection of Civilians (PoC) camp. South Sudan, War Child Holland South Sudan: WCH

"Abraham Chol, one of the community leaders, said that War Child training and support enabled them to better organize the work of community leaders and increased their understanding and involvement in the protection of children."

Where to start?

You will have already identified the protective systems and mechanisms in the community, and this next step is to determine if external agency support will be accepted by the community. If so, to understand what the most effective, sustainable, and appropriate ways are to do so (e.g., communication, behaviors, actions, attitudes), discuss with the community members some of the following questions, while ensuring they lead the discussion and decision making:

1. What are the best ways for community members and external actors to meet, dialogue, and make decisions?
2. What considerations are there for determining who should attend the meetings? How is this decided?
3. How much time can reasonably be made available for action planning processes?
4. Are there individuals who would be important to involve, but do not attend community discussions or meetings; if so, why? Are there other avenues for their views to be included in decision making?
5. Can children be included in community action planning processes in meaningful ways so that their voices contribute to decision making?
    a. If so, are there specific considerations for girls and boys?
    b. If there is reluctance to involve children, how can you, the external actors, communicate the importance of their participation? Can you find other ways to meaningfully involve them?
6. What will enable girls, boys, and excluded community members to play an active role in the work?
7. Are various community forums required to ensure participation of multiple groups? If so, what does that look like? What times allow for the most participation without conflicting with other responsibilities of various groups?
8. What kind of commitment are community members willing to put forward in support of children? What are the roles and responsibilities of various community members, external actors?

It is important to note that there may be multiple ways communities choose to meet, and various methods for inclusion.

An important component to address with communities will likely be related to financial compensation. It is not recommended to provide large sums of money, which can create an unsustainable system. Therefore, it is important to discuss openly how you will work together to achieve solutions for children. Ask, “What is expected of external actors?” Use this as an opportunity to reinforce your commitment to supporting the community in their efforts to protect children through meaningful partnership with communities.

It is common in more top-down approaches, such as Community Protection Committees, for external actors to provide incentives or cash payments to community volunteers. This is often called “volunteering” but is rarely grounded in true volunteerism or free labor in the name of community service. Therefore, it is important that a distinction is made between cash for work to conduct CP activities driven by external actors and the true community-led initiatives.

Communities may expect an external actor to provide compensation for travel or to provide beverages or food during the meeting.

Decisions around what is provided should always be weighed against sustainability and what is culturally appropriate.

What do you want to learn?

Once an open dialogue about roles and responsibilities as to who should be involved in the community response and what is expected of external actors is established, begin action planning alongside the community. It may be easiest to begin by looking back on the collective prioritization of risks to children. Communities may decide to address only one risk or multiple risks that may be interconnected. These decisions should be led by communities and not directed by external actors. However, it is important to maintain realistic expectations of what can be achieved and to encourage using resources the community is already bringing to protection efforts (e.g., human, financial, tangible, spiritual, social, cultural, what they are already doing to address harms) (see Guidance Note 3).

It is important that you (as an external actor) are there to provide facilitative support if needed and to ask key questions along the way. To guide you, a sample Action Plan template is included below.

However, communities should be encouraged to come up with their preferred method to record the discussions, decisions taken, and accountability mechanisms. The template below will likely be used as a record for your own support to communities.

Adapting Templates to Community Action Plan Approaches

Community members are always making decisions and carrying out actions for the benefit of the community; for instance, about planting crops, boring wells, addressing crime, etc. Particularly in communities with low literacy rates, these plans would rarely be written down. Introducing forms to fill out could seem strange and possibly give power to literate members of the community over others. You will want to have written documentation; however, there are some considerations.

First, you need to learn how decisions are taken and acted on in the community, how they are communicated, who might be the "keeper" of those decisions/plans, and so on. There can be an explicit agreement about how that will apply to the Child Protection (CP) Action Plan, and the way it is documented and agreed to with community members. For instance, humanitarian actors make timeframes based on weeks, months, or years; however, within the culture of a community, there may be other ways of setting benchmarks (e.g., holidays, seasons). So, the Action Plan document that you keep will reflect that framework.

It would also be important to understand how the community "monitors" their plans; for example, there may be regular meetings, less formal "check-ins." These would be documented in the Action Plan document.

If community processes are entirely oral, and you want to write things down, the reasons for that should be made very clear to community members to build trust. It would be useful to provide feedback on what is recorded to ensure accuracy. That could simply be at the end of a session to say, "Now I want to make sure that I have documented this correctly…." and then briefly summarize the main points discussed and any decisions made.

ACTION PLANNING WITH COMMUNITIES

Sample Action Plan Template

This sample template may be used to record:

1. The prioritized risks to children that the community have chosen to address
2. What key actions will be taken, by whom, and when
3. What the goals of those actions are
4. How you will know if these actions were successful

It is not likely that all the components of this resource will be answered in one meeting. Understand that it may take multiple sessions, various forums, and inclusive processes to achieve a level of consensus. Refer to Guidance Note 2 for additional ideas and guidance. This should be considered a "living" document, referred to frequently, updated if elements of the plan change (e.g., new actors, additional or fewer resources, change in activities or timeframe), and adapted as needed. Create a new template for each prioritized risk.

Action Plan Template					
Community Group Name or Members: (could be an administrative unit at which you are working, a team mobilized and choosing a name, or other grouping)					
Location:					
Date:					
What are the child protection risks that needs to be changed? Include a brief statement here of the priority protection issue(s) identified by the community that the below actions will address.					
What are our goals? If we successfully addressed this issue, what would that look like? Try to be specific and measurable if possible.					
How will we get there? List key actions that are required to achieve the goal. It might be helpful to think about what the root causes of the risk are and identify ways to influence them.					
Key Action	**Who is responsible?**	**Who can, or is mandated to, support?** (Consider elements of the formal child protection system, influential informal structures, opinion leaders, etc.)	**What resources are required?**	**Who provides those resources?**	**When can we achieve this?**
How will you monitor your progress? What is the role of community members in leading this monitoring? This is an opportunity to reflect on how you will ensure you are all accountable for the actions you have signed up for.					
What challenges or barriers might you face? It will be useful to consider the mindset of different actors, their reactions to our work, and how to address them.					

Working together

When discussing the Action Plan with communities, it is a good practice to ask members to identify actions that have a good chance of success. It may also be valuable to discuss with communities how long-term they wish their actions to be; if small groups should undertake certain actions, or if larger community processes are necessary; and should actions involve certain minority groups or be disaggregated by age or sex?

> Inclusivity is very important to cultivate during the action phase. Experience from many contexts indicates that it is harder to get men involved on issues of sexual exploitation and abuse, for example. Though it is often possible to engage men by asking teenagers, women, and engaged men how to do that. If community members themselves aim to bring in a greater diversity of people, cutting across gender, ethnicity, wealth and ability status, the action will more likely to succeed.

In your processes of dialogue and discussion you may have also identified some CP issues that community members do not want to, or are unable to, address and why. These may be issues that may feel "too big" to change, highlight power dynamics, or internal conflict, for example. These may well be issues that community members may not want external agencies to focus on, pressing those issues may negatively impact your community engagement.

Be wary of expensive actions that are not sustainable or will likely be viewed as externally driven. A simple conversation about how long community members expect risks to children to be present and how long their actions will take to address those risks will likely lead to an understanding that project-based funding that you (an external actor) provide is likely not sustainable. Reminding communities of the mapping exercise on their resources and capacities, as well as asking a few simple questions, can help. For example, start with the children themselves and work your way out:

1. What can children themselves do to address the risks they face in the community? How can their parents/caregivers support them to address these risks?
2. Who in the community should lead, or be involved in the implementation of the Action Plan? What are their various roles?
3. Should the Action Plan focus on linkages with the government or other formal CP actors? Who would be involved, and what would that look like?

Remember!

- Ongoing reflection is critical; the Action Plan should be reviewed constantly. Maybe the actions are no longer relevant as the risks to children may change, and new ones might emerge that require adaptation in the approaches.
- Do your best to ensure an inclusive process to action planning. Use your role as a helper to jointly problem-solve while encouraging ownership of the process and identified actions.
- Enable as much as possible participatory approaches that promote mobilization of internal resources and inclusion of children's contributions.
- Avoid payments or expensive actions that are unsustainable.

CASE STUDY:

Community Engagement in the Running of Child-friendly Spaces

Turkana County in northwest Kenya hosts 186,053 refugees in the Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. Armed conflict, famine, and political instability have led to an influx of refugees from neighboring countries. The needs of children are enormous, as demonstrated by high levels of physical and sexual abuse, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, tribal conflict, psychological and emotional abuse, and emotional distress/trauma reported among children at Child-Friendly Spaces (CFSs), schools, and in communities.

The main objectives of the program are to mobilize community resources to support activities related to child protection and children's well-being. This has been done through capacity-building activities with the refugee community. Parents of children from the refugee community participated in a 7-day training on topics that included child protection, Psychological First Aid, parenting skills, gender-based violence, referral pathways, leadership and team-building, nutrition, and kitchen gardening. The goal was to enable community members to respond to protection concerns on their own, with minimal support from agencies, to promote community independence and sustainability.

After the training, the committee led and mobilized other parents to join in cleaning the CFS compound by removing stones that potentially posed harm to the children and cutting thorny trees. The committee also took part in a tree planting event where 100 seedlings of neem plants were donated to the center. The idea was generated from them with the aims of future dust reduction, creating a greener environment, and increasing ownership of the center through team activity. Following the lead of the parents, the children are now adopting trees and helping to water and care for them.

Location:

Kenya

Date:

2019

Citation:

Adapted from: Mulunda, I. (2019). Community engagement in the running of child-friendly spaces. Kenya: IsraAID.

"Back in Burundi I used to be a leader but being a leader in this cross-cultural setting is thrilling. I am humbled that when I speak even men listen to what I say. I thank IsraAID for training me,"

- Francoise.

This initiative has promoted leadership, particularly among women. Francoise Uwimbabazi (29) is one of the leaders who has been attending our capacity-building sessions. Born and raised in Burundi, Francoise found herself in Kalobeyei after fleeing violent conflict. A wife and mother of two children, Francoise is a member of the steering committee for the CFS in Kalobeyei Village 2, serving proudly as committee vice chairperson. As a woman, she feels being a leader of a group that includes men is one of the most important responsibilities she has been accorded. She feels empowered and respected, which has improved her self-esteem.

GUIDANCE NOTE 9:

How to Facilitate Linkages Between Informal and Formal Child Protection Systems

Introduction

A high-quality CP response requires engagement with all service providers that work on behalf of children from the local, sub-national, and national level. If you have worked in a protracted crisis, it is easy to identify why this is so important. For example, Northeast Nigeria has been in crisis since 2009 when Boko Haram insurgents began fighting with the Nigerian army and displacing more than 1.8 million people. Nearly a decade later, the resources of humanitarian actors alone are not enough to continue a quality response for the millions of people requiring shelter, food, protection, and livelihoods. In addition, humanitarian access is limited to towns controlled and secured by military forces, leaving many people highly dependent on aid and forced to live in crowded camps. Partnerships across INGOs and national NGOs; government service providers at various levels; and protective mechanisms of family, friends, peers, community members, other CP "first-responders" at the grassroots level, as well as traditional community processes and actions, must work together to meet the needs of children and their families.

Community-level Child Protection in South Kordofan, Sudan[19]

The government of Sudan has a formal structure of Community-based Child Protection Networks (CBCPNs) throughout the country, including in humanitarian contexts. In South Kordofan State and communities have worked with local government to build protective environments for their children without a strong presence of external humanitarian actors. One particularly active CBCPN is based in a rural community near Kadugli, South Kordofan that is primarily comprised of families internally displaced by conflict. The network leadership is very active in analyzing the protection concerns in their community, as well as taking action to address them. They demonstrate strengths in Family Tracing and Reunification, other forms of protection referrals, as well as their own internal mobilization of resources to set up a small health clinic, for example. They have also responded to the very unique CP concerns they face and feel unable to address, including their close proximity to a live fire military range and an open wastewater storage facility that their children can easily access and be harmed.

Members of the Network cite the strong coordination between the CBCPN and formal systems, including capacity-building activities available to them, as contributing to their effectiveness in addressing their community's CP needs.

Understanding the CP risks and concerns at their different levels, and thinking through how these are, or are not, linked at the beginning of a humanitarian response can improve the sustainability of the response, the coordination of services, and the quality of the support to children over the length of the crisis.

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Throughout this Guidance Note, this work is referred to as "systems strengthening."

> ***CP systems' strengthening efforts are any actions taken to influence CP systems – their constituent components, the ways in which they function, or the ways in which systems components interact – with the aim of moving them closer to the goal of protecting children.***[20]

When does this happen?

Terminology

Formal: Elements of a system that are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations, and policies.

Informal: Elements of a system that do not have state/government mandates for the protective functions they fulfill. Instead, they are shaped by attitudes, values, behaviors, social norms, and traditional practices in society.

The boundaries between formal and informal elements will depend on the particular country's context.

Child Frontiers. (2016). Adapting to learn, learning to adapt: Overview of and considerations for child protection systems strengthening in emergencies (p. 8). Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

Like much of the guidance in this Reflective Field Guide, you should begin thinking through these linkages at the beginning of the humanitarian response, as well as in preparedness planning. Linkages should be built off of the Context Analysis and the work you have done to understand how communities understand CP risks, existing capacities to respond to those risks, and what the community feels are the most critical CP risks to address. It is important to remember that even if informal CP systems at the community level have broken down, are not functioning to the same level, or how they were prior to the crisis, most community members, including children, prefer to receive services and information through these channels, rather than through external mechanisms.

It may be that as you consider building linkages between informal and formal systems, you realize you have not critically looked at the legal frameworks, strategies, policies, services, institutions, and practices on a national, regional, and local government level. This is a good time to investigate practices and understand the available services and potential gaps. External actors can act as catalysts, capacity builders, and intermediaries between formal and informal systems; build on and enhance existing systems; bridge any gaps; and support transparency, accountability, and accessibility.

Where to start?

In the same way you mapped the context to understand existing capacities in the community (see Guidance Note 3), the same can be done for formal systems. There may be natural points of entry that provide opportunities to link community-level interventions with formal systems.

Prepare for building stronger linkages between the informal and formal CP systems by looking critically at the response itself. Begin by asking yourself and your team:

1. What are the components of your response that will have an impact on the wider CP system?
    a. Are there parallel systems that are being put in place? For example, often case management systems can be created by the NGO's response to support a surge in caseloads, as a stop-gap while the government services recover, or to support vulnerable populations that the government system may be unwilling or unable to serve. Investigate how this new case management system can support and link to the existing structure.
    b. Complicated external structures are developed during humanitarian response. One example of this is coordination mechanisms where important decisions about geographical coverage, service provision, and standards are taken – sometimes without government participation, agreement, or ownership. Examine how these parallel structures may be affecting longer term/ sustainable service provision from formal systems.
    c. Do your responses reflect community priorities for their access to different elements of the system?

2. Are there formal systems that could be strengthened by humanitarian actors?
    a. For example, consider foster care in the country. Does the child welfare system have an operational foster care program? Are there weaknesses in the program that could be supported by the humanitarian response, such as improving quality care assessments, increasing follow-up visits, or building foster care skills for caregivers?
    b. How do communities view and engage with elements of the formal system, and how can those understandings shape your programming.

3. Are there formal systems that could strengthen the work of humanitarian actors?
    a. For example, often humanitarian actors are external practitioners who do not have knowledge about the specific context or how to provide culturally appropriate services. Can existing systems, human resources, policies, or civil society be an opportunity for partnership that can strengthen the response?

4. Are there areas where there has been short-term investment, lack of transition plans, or interventions that do not build on existing structures?
5. Where are humanitarian actors recruiting staff? Is this weakening formal CP systems?
    a. For example, in crisis, many humanitarian actors recruit large numbers of staff. The rapid recruitment can sometimes draw employees away from the formal system and into NGO work. While, ultimately, the decision on employment is up to the individual, agencies may unknowingly be taking away valuable staff who are already working on children's needs.

What do we want to learn?

In your analysis of the above questions, consider some examples of how external humanitarian actors have strengthened systems in the past. A literature review of existing systems strengthening activities by Alliance includes (Child Frontiers, 2016):

- Assessing and understanding systems to identify bottlenecks and develop strengthening strategies
- Support to key partners within systems (State actors, national and local NGOs, community groups, children and their families), such as reinforcing links between actors at different levels and across sectors (e.g., strengthening referral pathways)

- Setting up or reinforcing coordination mechanisms, developing standard operating procedures, establishing or reinforcing information management systems
- Supporting emergency planning, strategy development, legislation development, and policy change
- Contextualization of the CP minimum standards
- Capacity building of the social workforce and improving access to CP services for excluded children
- Child-led or child-centered disaster risk reduction

This is not a comprehensive list, nor is it a to-do list. As you seek to answer the questions above, remember the foundation of systems strengthening is creating sustainability for longer term impact. This may not always be possible in a humanitarian crisis, especially a sudden onset crisis that does not allow for significant context analysis. "Adapting to learn, learning to adapt" suggests just seven main guiding questions that can be used to identify possible interventions (Child Frontiers, 2016, p. 62).

1. Outcomes: What are the outcomes of CP systems actions in this context? How does the behavior of systems affect children?
2. Systems: What CP systems exist in this location? At what level are they operating?
3. Sociocultural norms: What are the sociocultural norms on which the systems are based?
4. Perceptions: How do pre-existing actors within systems perceive us? How do they perceive each other? How are they perceived by the community?
5. Role: What is your role within systems? How do you interact with and/or influence them? How do they interact with and/or influence you? How do decisions you take – in relation to working with systems – affect children?
6. Assumptions: What are your assumptions and preconceptions based on the context where you come from? Based on the contexts you have worked in in the past? How can you prevent these from influencing your understanding of the systems and context in which you are now working?
7. Continuum of action: How can you complement and support all actors at all levels within existing systems to provide children and their families with a holistic range of actions that promote, prevent, and respond to CP?

Who should be involved?

The best way to achieve sustainability and impact for children is to broaden your understanding of systems strengthening to include not only INGOs and State actors, but civil society (local/national NGOs); community groups or protective assets (e.g., hospitals, religious organizations, activists, security personnel, youth groups); links with other sectors, such as livelihoods and health; and, most importantly, children and their families. Collaborating across all these stakeholders can be challenging. Consider the power dynamics at play between INGOs and local NGOs, the potential bias and influence of different religious groups in a given society, varying access to rights as may be the case in refugee contexts, or even the amount of financial resources, language spoken, or age. Be aware of the tensions that may exist between formal and non-formal actors, and the effect this may have on their relationship and collaboration.

In systems strengthening an external actor's role is to understand existing systems at all levels and to work in partnership with communities to identify with whom and in what way connections can be made between their work and formal systems. While the "how" may be different depending on context, all collaboration should be done with the best interest of the child and the family in mind, acknowledge the different roles all actors play in the system to protect children, seek to share knowledge, leverage capacities, and value equally the abilities of all partners.

CASE STUDY:

Linking Formal and Informal Systems to Strengthen Protection of Refugee Children

Tanzania hosts 328,083 refugees (88%) and asylum-seekers (12%); from Burundi (74%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (26%), over 54% are children, with 90% living in the Kigoma region, across three refugee camps: Nduta, Nyarugusu, and Mtendeli. While more than 75,000 Burundian refugees have voluntarily returned, it is anticipated that a significant number will remain in Tanzania given the unpredictable situation in Burundi.

Plan International Tanzania responded by working with host community child protection (CP) systems and District Social Welfare to extend services to refugee children. Traditionally, Government Social Welfare Officers (SWOs) only work in host communities, never in the refugee camps. Plan International Tanzania worked closely with regional and district government authorities, UNHCR, and UNICEF, and was eventually able to extend SWOs case management services to refugee children. SWOs were paired with refugee community members who were trained to support case management work (identification, referrals, follow-up, and translator).

By being intentional and consistent about establishing the linkages between informal and formal CP systems (establishing strong linkages between government, community and refugee structures, the UN, and INGOs and NGOs), the quality of CP services increased. An end-line survey (n=442) conducted revealed that, as a result, 86% of children surveyed felt safer, were happier with their alternative care arrangements, and had more confidence in the CP system compared to 49% during baseline.

Location:

Tanzania

Date:

2019

Citation:

Adapted from: Nyakoto, R. (2019). *Linking formal and informal systems to strengthen protection of refugee children.* Plan International Tanzania.

This connection and collaboration is not done through one event, but through systematic engagement that is flexible and iterative. Allow yourself to be open to a process that may be slow or take continued efforts.

How can you ensure your programming supports these processes?

As is reflected through much of the Reflective Field Guide, the mindset of how we work must change to increase the formation of positive linkages between formal and informal CP systems.

Do	Don't
Foster an environment that seeks to understand existing CP systems at all levels and to recognize their critical role as a partner in responding to the needs of children.	Set up parallel systems that will duplicate or undermine existing systems or reduce the capacity of those systems.
Establish a broader view of the actors, structures, and systems in the CP system and support linkages through the guidance and leadership of communities.	Have a narrow view of CP systems. It is not just government and INGOs, but a broad range of actors operating across the socio-ecological framework and sectors, including CBOs, communities, families, etc.
Allow for creative thinking that is not always linear, which requires continuous engagement with communities and other stakeholders, and that may not be easily measured by standard indicators	Limit linkages between formal and informal systems to just one intervention (e.g., case management) or standard benchmarks of success.
Ensure that staff have the needed capacities and time to learn about the context and its systems, identify actors, build relationships with community members and actors within the system, and to identify ways of engaging at all these levels.	Enforce standardized approaches that may do potential harm or lead to unsustainable programming.
Ensure your reflection does not only focus on the relationship you, as CP actor, have with both formal and non-formal actors, but try to understand how all these different actors relate to each other.	

Child Fund International's Community Links SMS initiative aims to strengthen CP referral pathways and linkages between formal and informal CP systems to better address the needs of Ebola-affected children in Liberia using a mobile technology platform. In collaboration with Root Change and Medic Mobile, Child Fund International adapted a two-way SMS-based mobile technology messaging system for CP case management and referral. It allows Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection social workers and other formal CP actors to conduct remote follow-up and monitoring of the well-being and reintegration of Ebola-affected children when they are discharged from Interim Care Centers or Ebola Treatment units. It also supports informal CBCP actors at the community level to connect these children with referral to protection, health, and education services. The SMS platform is aligned with the Ministry's existing Child Tracking Form and case management protocols, and it offers efficient, secure, time and cost-effective, context-sensitive, real-time analytics, and linkages (Child Fund International Liberia, 2015).

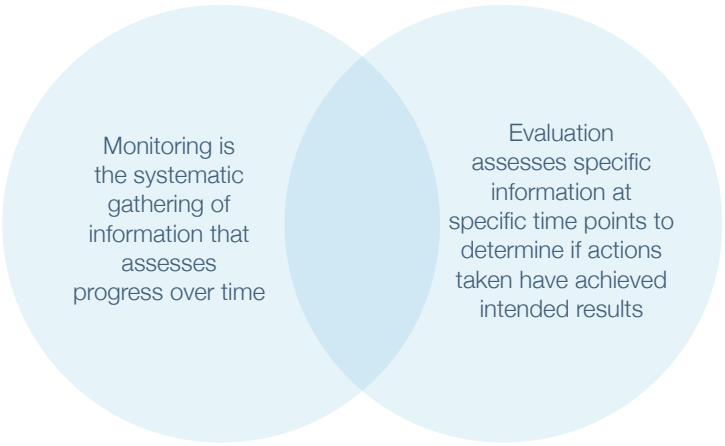
GUIDANCE NOTE 10:

Reflecting on the Quality of Your Partnership with Communities

You will be working with communities to identify CP risks that communities want to address (Guidance Note 6), setting goals for those actions (Guidance Note 8), and deciding how you will monitor your joint progress to address those risks.

While you have your own program cycle M&E processes and compliance standards with your donors, the focus here is on community-driven actions to hold themselves accountable to their own work on behalf of children. It is essential to work with community members and children to develop collective goals and design M&E processes of their own. The terminology "monitoring" and "evaluation" should not be imposed on communities. Participatory approaches to M&E differ from agencies' program-cycle approaches, as they are led by the community, their processes, and their priorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation are linked, but separate processes[21]



Designing a monitoring plan together with the community

During action planning in the community, it will be helpful to allocate time to discuss how the community keeps track of which steps they have taken along the way and how they will identify gaps or challenges that require adjustments to the Action Plan. Every community will have its own approaches to measuring change. It is important to frame these processes with local language and methods, as the terminology used by external humanitarian actors can be alienating.

This conversation should be an ongoing dialogue aiming to develop a contextualized framework. Some considerations for these discussions may be:

1. If the child protection issue that you have prioritized is successfully addressed, what does that look like?
2. How would you suggest keeping track of progress?
3. How would you suggest adjusting plans if progress toward the goal is lagging?
4. Is it helpful to consult others in the community to gather their opinion about the progress?
5. Who should be involved in these discussions?

This discussion may naturally lead to reflecting on the Action Plan and various methodologies for monitoring the actions. Specifically, in a CCP program, you may want to encourage the community to think about what it means to monitor each step they have identified to reach their goals, consider what methods should be available to monitor the changing environment and needs around children, and determine how they could modify or adapt their Action Plan from this feedback. It may also be important to monitor various inputs that were listed as required to support the Action Plan.

As an example, community members in a camp for IDPs might be concerned about the lack of activities for older children and adolescents, which left them loitering in the camp and at risk of getting engaged in harmful behaviors (e.g., violence, drinking, drug use, crime). Concerned community members could agree on actions to address the concerns, for instance; supporting older adolescents and youth volunteers providing positive activities for older children; advocating for support to access educational opportunities; or other actions they think could be effective. The community members should develop ways of learning if those activities are being implemented and if they have had the intended impact; that is, if children are returning to school, or the recreational activities are leading to improved well-being for children. With this information they can measure their effectiveness, appropriateness, relevance, etc., to make needed changes in their actions, if needed.

It is important to develop a healthy and open communication about reflecting on progress and challenges so that when there are check-ins, it is in good spirits and does not feel like community actions are being criticized.

> ***Participatory monitoring should help those involved to learn to draw conclusions for decision making out of the "practice-error-reflection-correction-and-action" process and to guide the activities according to "lessons learned."*** [22]

Designing an evaluation plan

While monitoring is important to ensure community actions are headed in the right direction, evaluations are meant to measure the overall impact of a program or a response. An evaluation is an assessment of the program at a specific point in time. It compares the actual project outcomes against the planned objectives. It looks at what you set out to do, what you have achieved, and how you achieved it. It should result in recommendations to improve the running actions and the impact.

During an Action Plan process, the community will have identified goals for their work to address risks to children. At the time of development of the Action Plan, it is advised to discuss with involved community members what successful implementation of the action looks like. At regular moments, set by the community, you can facilitate reflection using questions such as:

1. How did your action impact the lives of children (until this moment)?
2. Is the change you are seeing the result of this action or might there be another reason for the change?
    a. If it is a result of the action, what went well?
    b. If it is not the result of the action, what happened? Is there a need to adjust the action?
3. What helped you to achieve impact? What prevented you from reaching a goal?

As part of this discussion, it is critical to capture success stories. Identifying what is working, documenting the process and the impact the action has had, and sharing it with the wider community can generate energy and passion around other parts of the Action Plan. It can also encourage more participation from other community members. Evaluations are used to ensure community accountability to children and families and to learn from the approaches used.

- Participatory evaluation is a process of involving participants in programs to reflect critically on their own projects, programs, aims, and leadership.
- Its value is that it continues the process of action-reflection and increases the awareness that people themselves can shape their own lives and destiny.
- The people themselves examine the strengths and weaknesses so that they can contribute more to the success of their own work.
- The main purpose of participatory evaluation is to have a positive effect on the participants' own lives and the community of which they are a part.[23]

Mechanisms for community, family, and child feedback

A feedback mechanism is a comprehensive system designed to capture and report the viewpoint of girls, boys, and young people; communities; and partners about an agency's work to improve it.[24]

Real accountability to children and their families means providing opportunities for them to decide whether and how you work with them, and the power to hold you accountable for what you do. Community-level action can practice accountability through:

- **Participation:** Actively listen to views of girls, boys, men, and women and decide together on the ways you will work together to support children, families, and communities.
- **Information sharing:** Provide information about the community actions in accessible formats that all girls, boys, men, and women can understand easily.
- **Respond to feedback**: Ensure mechanisms are available to seek views and concerns from the children and families you work with. Provide a timely response to their complaints with details about the decisions and actions taken, and involve community members in discussion as to how to appropriately respond to the feedback/complaints received.

The main steps to developing feedback and complaint mechanisms include:[25]

1. Decide who in your agency should be in a team to develop the design (e.g., M&E staff, management, field staff).
2. In your context analysis consider what already exists in the community, the most appropriate methods for the context, possible risks, and capacities that you and your partners will need to establish the mechanism, among other strategic considerations.
3. Decide what type of feedback is important for you to have (specific, all-inclusive?).
4. Define how the mechanisms align with your agency's policies and programming..
5. Consult with children, adolescents, men, women, community leaders, and the wider community on the methods of feedback that would be most relevant, appropriate, and useful. Consider these alongside your resources and capacities.

6. In designing your mechanisms consider factors such as age, gender, inclusion, as well as how to ensure confidentiality, safety, and conflict sensitivity.
7. Design the feedback process: what actions are taken, by whom, at different stages.
8. Plan what resources are needed and mobilize adequate resources (e.g., human, logistical, financial, technology).
9. Develop plans for implementation and staff capacity building.
10. Consult with community members on how to raise awareness and inform the community about the system and how it works.
11. Support community members in community awareness activities.
12. Implement the feedback process.
13. Receive feedback.
14. Categorize that feedback according to your plan.
15. Respond to that feedback according to your feedback process plan.
16. Close the process once that feedback has been addressed, inform the community of your actions, and ask them how satisfied they are with your response.

There are many types of complaint and feedback mechanisms.[26] For example, you can conduct community or children consultations in a focus group-type format to learn about community members' and/or children's opinions of your programs. Child-friendly feedback forms can provide a format for collecting written feedback from children with age-appropriate questions that consider cognitive and literacy abilities. Another example of a feedback mechanism is to conduct town hall meetings where families and community members can share their thoughts and feedback directly.

You may also consider making suggestion boxes available for use. This is especially helpful to support anonymous feedback. While anonymity may allow for more open feedback, it limits your ability to follow up on CP incidents or reporting of exploitation. Innovative approaches include setting up a hotline to receive phone calls or SMS feedback.

You will have to consider what methods are most appropriate to your context. It is important to have some different methods that are inclusive of all community members. Resources are discussed below to help you develop feedback mechanisms.

Collecting feedback is only part of the accountability system. Feedback is collected to build trust within the community and to improve your programming. Therefore, you need to respond fully to complaints and feedback that you receive. From analyzing the data you collect, you can identify areas that need improvement, activities that should be initiated, and even complaints that may require more formalized follow-up.

Respond back to the people who have provided feedback! Let them know the findings of the feedback provided and how you will use the information to adjust the community Action Plan. Additional external resources are also available below.

Helpful tools for external actors

While the focus of this guidance is on appropriate community processes for tracking their CP actions, you, as a CP actor, will still need to provide documentation for your own programmatic reporting. Below are a couple of ideas and tools. These are not meant to be prescribed to communities but could guide you (as an external actor/facilitator) in your discussions with communities.

Success story documentation

At all stages of your CCP interventions, you should look at what you are learning from the process and determine how to record it for future programs. It is important to document the successes together with the community and present the outcome back to them, as it may motivate continuation/further action. There are many different ways that success can be documented—in writing, with photos or videos, audio recordings, or a combination of these. Allow the community to decide their way of capturing success. The outcomes of the community M&E efforts can be used by agencies to report on the success or challenges of the program. Most of the time, agencies are required to monitor and evaluate the success of the program beyond the systems set in place by the community.

Case studies

Humanitarian CP actors write "case studies" as a common form of documentation. Below is a template to consider:

Sample Case Study Template

Title: (e.g., Meaningful Child Participation in Disaster Preparedness)

Country, location: (e.g., region, province, village)

Description of humanitarian context: (e.g., disaster early warning)

Agency(ies) and case study author(s):

Summary sentence: One opening sentence that summarizes the case study (e.g., This case study describes a child- and youth-led Disaster Preparedness in Quezon Province, Philippines.).

Background: (1 paragraph)

2-3 lines to introduce the humanitarian context

2-3 lines to explain the specific needs of girls and boys in general

2-3 lines to give an overview of the gaps in services for children and/or youth, including the gaps that this project responds to

Programmatic action: (1 paragraph)

The overall goal/aim of the intervention

The main components of the intervention, specific approaches that were used in the project. Emphasize those presented in guidance as good practice (e.g., building on community resources, supporting community-identified concerns, community-planned interventions).

Key activities that contributed to positive outcomes

Achievements: (½ page)

These may be at differing levels (e.g., individual child/children, family, community) depending on the aim of the intervention, though it is important to note unintended outcomes (positive and negative).

Examples could include:

- Change in children's well-being, sense of safety, ability to protect themselves and others, feeling of inclusion and ability to contribute to family and community protection, etc.
- Change in families' abilities to protect children, contribute to wider protection efforts in the community, influence on protection systems, etc.
- Change in community protective functions, ability to mobilize resources for child protection, influence wider systems of protection, etc.

Quotes and Photos

If possible, include real quotes from project staff, volunteers, or children. Photos are also very useful, ensuring consent is given and safeguarding considerations are made.

Quality scorecards

Scorecards are simple formats for you to continually check on the progress of your CCP programming. You fill it in with the key actions and processes that were agreed on to achieve your aim. You can update these on a regular basis. Analyzing results (e.g., which "yes" areas to celebrate and which "no" areas to act on) will help to ensure that the program is meeting the needs of children.

Below is a sample scorecard. Contextualize it to meet timeframes agreed on or add other standards that communities wish to apply. Adapted from Plan International's Program Quality, Impact, and Accountability Toolkit.

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020).

General Information	
Date of Scorecard Completion:	
Name of Person Completing Scorecard:	
Title of Person Completing Scorecard:	
Reporting Period:	
Location:	

	Standards for Self-Assessment	Yes	Partly	No	Explain
1.	A context analysis has been undertaken that includes, at a minimum:				
	a. Community understandings of and priorities on child protection risks				
	b. Internal resources the community can mobilize for protection				
	c. Risk analysis of potential harm of external involvement in CCP				
	d. Strategies for strengthening community-led approaches with a long-term perspective				
2.	Children and adolescents have defined roles that contribute in demonstrable ways according to their development and abilities.				
3.	Approaches demonstrate participation by persons who are especially vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization.				
4.	There is a capacity-building plan based on assessed needs and analysis of most appropriate approaches and actors. Check all elements that may apply:				
	a. Contextualized understanding of child protection and risk concepts				

	b. Mapping local resources of risk and protection				
	c. Roles and responsibilities in committees or networks (if applicable)				
	d. Identification of children at particular risk and appropriate responses				
	e. Approaches to advocacy and prevention that build on local capacities				
	f. Other (please list)				
5.	There is/are Action Plan(s) developed in collaboration with the community that define (check all that apply):				
	a. Priority concerns and actions for prevention and response				
	b. Roles and responsibilities of community and external actors (including resource inputs)				
6.	Linkages are in place to facilitate referral to and support from other elements of the formal system when needed, including other sector responses.				
7.	Child-friendly feedback, monitoring, accountability mechanisms developed in consultation with the community are established and regularly reviewed.				

GUIDANCE NOTE 11:

Community-level Child Protection in Humanitarian Action: The Need for a Shift in Mindset

To transform your agency's and CP practices, you first have to transform yourselves. An essential first step is to reflect on your own mindsets, values, and attitudes.[27]

Facilitative program approaches

In humanitarian settings, agencies often have to work as quickly as possible to address protection risks in the community. It is not always possible to take the slow, deliberative approach that evidence indicates will establish effective and sustainable CCP. As has been discussed in earlier chapters, it may not always be appropriate to mobilize communities in humanitarian contexts. However, even when it is determined that a more "top-down" approach is necessary to meet immediate and urgent protection needs (e.g., forming protection committees or establishing safe spaces), there are some steps in establishing the groundwork of a participatory process that can support and plan for increasing degrees of community leadership over time, and as appropriate.

This Reflective Field Guide invites us to reflect on how to implement community-level approaches that uphold the principles of CP programming. As noted, this will require an honest examination of your own attitudes and approaches, the openness to deal with some discomfort, and the flexibility to embrace other ways of working.

Part 4 presented Key Considerations for effective community engagement, and below is a brief summary of those particularly important for considering the kinds of adaptations you may need to make as practitioners, and within your agencies.

- Establish from the outset the expectation that your external support is temporary, and you want to build on the resources and capacities of the community.
- Promote and maintain transparency – be candid about the agency's agenda mission/purpose, funding priorities, etc., at the appropriate time and with appropriate sensitivity.
- Begin your deep context analysis as soon as possible, even if you are required to provide immediate direct services (see Key Considerations and How to Guides). Ensure that information gathering is an iterative and ongoing process, and that it informs programming and keeps it relevant and adaptable.
- Emphasize dialogue with and between community members to begin to outline what participation would look like in the processes of your community engagement.
- Place emphasis on the protection priorities of the community. Find flexible approaches to meet needs that may not "align" to the priorities of your agency or funding sources.
- Facilitate problem-solving dialogues to develop responses to the community's prioritized risks that are relevant, appropriate, and harness the community's capacities and resources.

- Provide regular and ongoing feedback to the community regarding assessments, programming decisions, monitoring, evaluations, etc. This is critical for building trust and establishing transparency.
- Make space for meaningful community feedback through accessible and appropriate mechanisms, and openly use that feedback to refine approaches based on community perceptions.
- Increase focus on preparedness and ways to mitigate potential risks and challenges, which evidence shows can very effectively be done through community-level approaches.
- If and when appropriate, act as an intermediary, linking communities with a formal CP system and institutions. This brings grassroots knowledge to higher level decision-making bodies and broadens the protective environment for children.
- Use training and capacity building as opportunities to facilitate positive social change from within communities themselves. Be responsive to community and partner organizations' priorities for capacity building, even when they are not the same as your training priorities.
- Strengthen collaboration and coordination mechanisms among humanitarian actors to develop consistent and harmonized approaches to CCP.

CASE STUDY:

Providing Psychosocial Support Through Trained Volunteers

Malimono is a rural barangay situated in the hills around Marawi City. This is not a displacement setting, but it is remote. Plan International Philippines and the national NGO Balay Rehabilitation supported Child-Friendly and Woman-Friendly Spaces in Malimono as part of the Marawi siege response in 2017-2018. Female volunteers from the barangay implemented activities that focused on skill building and psychosocial support for both target audiences. Systems strengthening was also a core component with the local government units, including the development of a referral pathway for CP and GBV.

The CFS facilitators extended their contributions beyond their defined scope of work. They received small financial incentives as facilitators, which they then used to purchase slippers and food to cook for the children in the initiative. They also began a project of their own to purchase educational materials and once a week take them to a satellite learning center, a two-hour walk, to voluntarily run sessions for children in a remote area.

Facilitators shared that the support they received in terms of capacity building had many positive outcomes for them and for the women and children in their community:

- Seeing positive changes in the children and women participants during the course of the project
- Public greetings and appreciation when they encountered participants out in the community
- A sense of having contributed something valuable to their community
- Learning and developing their own skills, leading some to consider getting professional training in education and social services

When asked what contributes to effective community engagement volunteering, especially why they have gone beyond the scope of their work, the women summed up the needed ingredients as empathy, patience, love, and motivation.

Location:

Marawi, Phillippines

Date:

2017-2018

Citation:

Focus group discussion with community volunteers, Plan International, December 2018.

Building on community resources

Evidence shows that introducing large sums of financial or material resources (including payments to individuals for their participation in activities) can weaken community ownership and limit sustainability. Exceptions may be made for small supports (such as phone credit, notebooks, refreshments, or uniforms) that are given in exchange for performing agreed-upon responsibilities. In such cases, interagency coordination is required to decide how best to provide and standardize support. It may be worth considering financial support to whole-community initiatives as opposed to resourcing individuals.[28]

You have learned that motivated volunteerism is key to effective and sustainable community-level work. This reality advises us to limit the input of large amounts of external resources (financial and human) at the outset but focus on motivating activities supporting the natural commitment to volunteerism.

You must also reflect on your expectations of volunteers in your programs, listening to community members determine what is a reasonable amount of time each person should volunteer. In addition to considering time expectations, you must weigh decisions about payment with other forms of recognition. There are many ways to sustain and motivate the spirit of volunteerism, such as capacity-building opportunities, and public acknowledgment and appreciation. If there are expectations that volunteers will be needing transportation or communication resources to undertake their work, these should be provided. Those expectations should be discussed in depth and be clear from the outset of any programming. It is also important that there be consistency across organizations so as not to create confusion or tensions between volunteers if incentives are significantly different across humanitarian agencies.

In light of the increasing reliance on volunteers taking on para-professional duties, such as case management and counseling, it is important that capacity building take into consideration these expectations, means of engagement, and appropriate support. Capacity-building efforts to develop those skills can offer possibilities for future employment, which could be highly motivating. Experience shows, though, high turnover rates for volunteers carrying out these functions due to burnout, income-generating needs, and other challenges to long-term volunteerism. This is an important area to address in strengthening community engagement.

CASE STUDY:

Child Protection Coaching Program for Outreach Volunteers

Due to the Syrian conflict, Lebanon is now the country with the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. An estimated 55% of the refugee population are children under the age of 18. The situation for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon remains dire, as children continue to face significant barriers to access their basic rights, including safety, protection, education, and birth registration. Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), as well as children with disabilities, are particularly marginalized and at high risk of violence, discrimination, inequity, and exclusion. UASCs face the risk of resorting to working in dangerous and exploitative conditions.

UNHCR, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), has been implementing a national capacity-building project since 2014, called the "Interagency Coaching Program." The program trains child protection outreach volunteers (CP OVs) from the refugee community to respond to low-and medium-risk cases of UASC, children with disabilities, and their caregivers. Those targeted are at heightened risk but may not be eligible for individual case management or benefit from complementary community-based support. The CP OV interventions are part of, and complementary to, the case planning conducted by specialized CP case management actors, including partners of UNHCR. Case workers supervise and oversee the CP OVs.

The Specialized CP OV project sought to use the capacities in the community to support the large number of children in need. The CP OVs are identified through self-referral, the ProGres Database, or through participatory assessments and community-based activities to find those who had relevant education or experience working with children. CP OVs have a clear Terms of Reference in place and receive a 15-hour induction training in safe identification and referral of CP cases, effective communication skills, community engagement, conflict resolution, psychological first aid, and other topics before beginning their volunteering experience.

Location:

Lebanon

Date:

2019

Citation:

UNHCR. (2019). *Child protection coaching program for Outreach Volunteers* (adapted).

The skills and experience they receive as CP OVs could be used when they return to Syria.

The program has led to an increase in identification and referral of protection cases, as well as specialized support to children who previously did not receive it. CP OVs have developed confidence in supporting vulnerable children, as well as their parents. Specialized case workers have strengthened their skills in supervision. Overall, children and their caregivers feel comfortable receiving support from their own community members, strengthening community-level protection.

Transforming organizational approaches

> ***A crucial first step to improving the synergy between a local and an external protection agency is for outside actors to acknowledge people at risk as independent actors with significant capacity. However, for any true progress to take place, outside actors must go farther and place local understanding of protection threats and local strategies at the very center of their own activities by giving affected communities and individuals actual control and decision-making power over programs and projects. If based on humanitarian principles and done with sufficient caution, sensitivity, and mentoring, such a move would not only strengthen a local agency, but would also inform and improve an external agency.***[29]

The real change toward more effective CCP will have to happen within humanitarian agencies. Our historically "top-down" approaches are very institutionalized and shaped by donor funding policies (e.g., short project timeframes, prioritization of specific CP issues), and the humanitarian architecture. This is an important time for reflection within your agencies as to what changes need to be made to be more flexible, adaptable, and innovative in designing CCP initiatives.

The following are some suggestions:

- Engage with donors to adapt funding systems, timeframes, and reporting that are appropriate for different levels of community involvement. This advocacy will require humanitarian actors to better document effective approaches and share learning on the positive results from different approaches.
- Program design takes a long-term perspective:
    - Plan from the very beginning for transitioning from "top-down" interventions if they are required to meet immediate needs. It may also be possible to begin a more "bottom-up" approach parallel to initial efforts.
    - Consider flexible program approaches that can respond and adapt to changing circumstances or new ideas and, to the extent possible, allow them to be shaped through community engagement rather than predetermined.
    - Budget for ongoing mapping and action planning with adequate resources, such as dedicated staff time and support costs (e.g., travel).
    - Design M&E frameworks that include process indicators that track key components of community-level engagement.
- Have a strong physical presence in the communities in which you work, to the extent possible (e.g., office space), and prioritize hiring local staff.
- Focus capacity building on more than just CP technical skills; emphasis needs to be placed on the "soft skills" needed for effective community-level work (see above). These "soft skills," however, are not just things you can be trained on. Instead, they need to be reflected in the overall organizational culture so that they are fostered and reinforced.
- Function in a collaborative way with coordination structures and all other relevant parts of the CP system beyond just CP actors, developing systemic and standardized approaches to achieve CP and well-being.

The Child Protection in Humanitarian Action Competency Framework: Testing Version identifies four Core Values that run through all behavioral and technical competencies – empathy, integrity, diversity, and inclusion.[30] There are other attitudes and values that are important for community engagement, including respect, humility, compassion, patience, and non-judgmental attitude . The cultivation of these "soft skills" should be an important consideration for recruitment, capacity building, and supervision.