Using **Social Media** in Community-Based Protection

A Guide: January 2021

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Credits to

This Guide is the product of collaborative efforts by UNHCR staff. UNHCR thanks all who contributed. The manual is a work in progress, which will be revised over time according to the feedback from users.

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Social Media for Protection, an additional duty of care

People are at the heart of all we do and this guide reflects that. It begins and ends with UNHCR's commitment to Accountability to Affected People (AAP). This means listening to Refugees and other People of Concern in all their diversity and making sure they have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

The humanitarian sector has grown in the understanding that affected people are the prime agents in their own protection. This Guide aims to support UNHCR country offices in the use of Social Media to protect People of Concern (PoCs) and ensure they enjoy their rights.

We will show how UNHCR staff and partners can develop a Community-Based Protection (CBP) strategy, using Social Media in a way that respects UNHCR's data protection policy and PoCs' rights to privacy and security. The aim is to mobilize and support sustainable digital structures that represent everyone in a given community and develop appropriate protection responses on Social Media.

In this guide, we define Social Media as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and You Tube). We also mean software that enables messages to be sent and received instantly, also referred to as "Messaging Apps" (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal and FB Messenger).

Social Media give people a voice but they are not entirely innocuous. Their capacity to generate and harvest huge amounts of metadata and inferred data mean they can be used and abused in ways not apparent to users, and beyond UNHCR's control.

This guide should be shared with all protection partners and stakeholders interested in how Social Media can enhance protection while avoiding security and privacy risks to People of Concern. With due diligence, Social Media can strengthen participation, engagement, transparency, outreach and advocacy. The aim is to incorporate the feedback, ideas and opinions of People of Concern in our future protection programming.

For over two decades, UNHCR has been committed to using community-based approaches. Experience shows that working in partnership with communities and building on their agency and capacities is the surest path to effective and sustainable protection outcomes.

In many places, communities are already using Social Media among themselves and with service providers to get information and share ideas. For them, Social Media has become the preferred communication tool.

But let us not forget that PoCs often have less access to Social Media than the rest of the population and sometimes entire groups are excluded from online conversations. Our Social Media strategies should try to overcome and not deepen that exclusion.

And of course we must always keep at the forefront of our minds UNHCR's principle of **"DO NO HARM"**, which is as sacred to humanitarian workers as the Hippocratic Oath is to doctors.

In the digital era, any decision to implement projects using Social Media brings risks and protection concerns that need to be weighed against the benefits. Social Media can be used to track and profile individuals, pressurize, groom and even traffic them. This applies to staff and volunteers as well as the vulnerable people seeking humanitarian aid.

UNHCR may not always be in a position to mitigate risks on Social Media. So country operations should work actively with communities to inform them about possible data privacy and security issues.

When using this guide, do so within the framework of UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015. This lays out a number of obligations for the Data Controller to safeguard the right to privacy, data security, confidentiality and other rights of data subjects.

When country operations decide to engage People of Concern through Social Media, an additional duty of care arises. Social Media will not be appropriate in every protection situation. Social Media can exacerbate inequalities of age, gender, literacy and computer literacy.

But in some situations Social Media are invaluable for contacting individuals who might otherwise be out of reach and sharing potentially life-saving information. This guide is all about making the most of Social Media while avoiding the pitfalls that could compromise the very protection outcomes we seek.

✎ Tips

This guide can be read in conjunction with other documents such as UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 2018, UNHCR's Community-Based Approach Manual and UNHCR's Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP).

It is not designed to support UNHCR offices set up, UNHCR institutional accounts or UNHCR staff Personal accounts. If you are interested in how to set up an institutional account or how to embed UNHCR guidelines and principles in your personal account, see Administrative Instruction on the Use of Social Media.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
AMA	Ask Me Anything
API	Application Programming Interface
BIMS	Biometric Identity Management System (UNHCR)
CBCM	Community-Based Complaints Mechanism
CBP	Community-Based Protection
CE	Community Engagement
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CfR	Connectivity for Refugees (UNHCR)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWC	Communications with Communities
DER	Division of External Relations (UNHCR)
DES	Digital Engagement Section (UNHCR)
DIMA	Data, Identity Management and Analysis Unit (UNHCR)
DIP	Division of International Protection (UNHCR)
DIST	Division of Information Systems & Telecommunications (UNHCR)
DPG	Data Protection Guidance (UNHCR)
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
DPO	Data Protection Officer
DPP	Data Protection Policy (UNHCR)
DRRM	Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service (UNHCR)
DRS	Division of Resilience & Solutions (UNHCR)
DSPR	Division of Strategic Planning & Results (UNHCR)
ER	External Relations (UNHCR)
F&R	Feedback & Response
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDS	Global Data Service (UNHCR)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IM	Information Management
IMO	Information Management Officer

INA	Information Needs Assessment
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Intersex
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MFT	Multi-Functional Team
MI	Mass information
MIRA	Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PoC	Person of Concern
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PI	Public Information
PR	Public Relations
PRIMES	Population Registration and Identity Management Ecosystem (UNHCR)
SM	Social Media
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol

Glossary

Anonymization	Technique that ensures a set of personal data has been irreversibly modified so the data subject is no longer identifiable. No element may be left in the information which could, with reasonable effort, serve to re-identify the person concerned.

<div align="right">Source: UNHCR</div>

API	A set of functions and procedures within an operating system, application or other service that enables external applications to access that service's features or data. a This can be compared to a customer service window at a bank. Just as a customer must go through a process of verification to withdraw or deposit money, an external application must follow the API's rules to interact with the host service.

<div align="right">Source: ICRC</div>

Artificial Intelligence	Artificial Intelligence refers to "[a] set of sciences, theories and techniques whose purpose is to reproduce by a machine the cognitive abilities of a human being."[1] In its current form, it aims to allow technology developers "to entrust a machine with complex tasks previously delegated to a human".

<div align="right">Source: ICRC/CoE</div>

Asylum	The granting by a State of protection on its territory to individuals from another State who are fleeing persecution or serious danger. Asylum encompasses a variety of elements, including non-refoulement, permission to remain on the territory of the asylum country and humane standards of treatment.

<div align="right">Source: UNHCR</div>

Asylum-seeker	An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee but every refugee was once an asylum-seeker.

<div align="right">Source: UNHCR</div>

Child	A "child" as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), means "every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". In terms of actions by UNHCR, the word "child" refers to all children falling under the competence of the Office, including asylum-seeking children, refugee children, internally- displaced children, returnee children assisted and protected by UNHCR and stateless children.

<div align="right">Source: UNHCR</div>

Community-Based Approach	A Community-Based Approach is a way of working in partnership with People of Concern during all stages of UNHCR's program cycle. It recognizes the resilience, capacities, skills and resources of People of Concern, builds on these to deliver protection and solutions and supports the community's own goals.
	Source: UNHCR
Communications with Communities (CwC)	Field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by crisis. CwC assumes that information and communications are forms of aid, without which disaster survivors cannot access services or make the best decisions for themselves and their communities.
	Source: UNOCHA
Consent	Any freely given and informed agreement by the data subject to the processing of his/her personal data. It may be given either orally or in writing or by clear affirmative action.
	Source: UNHCR
Data Controller	The UNHCR staff member, usually the Representative in a UNHCR country office, who has the authority to oversee the management of, and to determine the purposes for, the processing of personal data.
	Source: UNHCR
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Data Protection Impact Assessment or DPIA is an assessment that identifies, evaluates and addresses the risks to personal data arising from a project, policy, program or other initiative.
	Source: UNHCR
Data Subject	An individual whose personal data is subject to processing.
	Source: UNHCR
Durable solutions	A durable solution is achieved when a durable legal status is obtained which ensures national protection for civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Durable solutions can be achieved through voluntary repatriation, local integration, resettlement or complementary pathways.
	Source: UNHCR

Gender Based Violence

An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.

Source: UNHCR

Persons with specific needs

Individuals, families or groups requiring additional support in order to enable them to overcome the challenges they face in accessing and enjoying their rights.

Source: UNHCR

Personal Data Breach

A breach of data security leading to the accidental or unlawful/illegitimate destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorized disclosure of, or access to, personal data transferred, stored or otherwise processed.

Source: UNHCR

Implementing Partner

An organization established as an autonomous and independent entity from UNHCR that UNHCR engages through a project partnership agreement to undertake the implementation of programmatic activities within its mandate.

Source: UNHCR

Indicators (RBM Term)

Indicators are variables that provide a simple and reliable means to measure gaps and achievements. They are expressed in a form that can be translated into statistics, which may include numbers or percentages. Indicators are used for quantitative data collection that represents a key component of Results-Based Management (RBM). They include:

- Impact indicators: variables that facilitate measurement of changes in welfare or behaviour of People of Concern.
- Performance indicators: variables that facilitate measurement of the quantity and quality of delivered outputs in quantifiable terms.

Source: UNHCR

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

An individual who has been forced to flee from their home or place of habitual residence, "...in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, general violence, violations of human rights and natural or human-made disasters; and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (according to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement).

Source: UNHCR

International protection	All actions aimed at ensuring the equal access to and enjoyment of the rights of women, men, girls and boys of concern to UNHCR, in accordance with the relevant bodies of law (including international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law). See also "Protection" below.
	Source: IASC
Messaging App	A mobile-phone-based software program that allows users to send and receive information from and to their phones over an internet connection (either via Wi-Fi or mobile data networks).
	Source: ICRC
Migrant	An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.
	Source: IOM
Misinformation	Misinformation is information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm. It differs from Disinformation, which is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country; and from Malinformation, which is based on reality and used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organization or country.
	Source: UNESCO
Person of Concern (PoC)	A person whose protection and assistance needs concern to UNHCR. PoCs are not only refugees but also asylum-seekers, stateless people, internally displaced people and returnees.
	Source: UNHCR
Personal data	Data related to an individual that could identify him or her. Data can be biographical, e.g. name, sex, marital status, date and place of birth, country of origin, country of asylum, individual registration number, occupation, religion and ethnicity. Biometric data includes photographs, fingerprints and facial or iris images. Any assessments of the individual's status and/or specific needs also count as personal data.
	Source: UNHCR

Protection   All activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of international law (i.e. international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law).

Source: UNHCR

Refugee   A person who meets the criteria of the refugee definition under international or regional instruments, UNHCR's mandate and/or national legislation.

A refugee is any person who,

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention

OR

"who is outside his/her country of origin or habitual residence and is unable to return there because of serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order." (OAU Convention and Cartagena Declaration).

Source: UNHCR

Reintegration   A process enabling returnees to regain the physical, material, social and legal security they need for life, livelihood and dignity, and which eventually erases any observable distinctions vis-à-vis their compatriots.

Source: UNHCR

Risk   An uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative effect on objectives.

Source: UNHCR

Risk Communication

Risk Communication refers to the exchange of real-time information, advice and opinions between experts and people facing threats to their health and economic or social well-being. The ultimate purpose of Risk Communication is to enable people at risk to take informed decisions to protect themselves and their loved ones. Risk Communication uses many communications techniques, ranging from media and Social Media to mass communications and community engagement. It requires a sound understanding of people's perceptions, concerns and beliefs, as well as their knowledge and practices. It also requires the early identification and management of rumors, misinformation and other challenges.

Source: WHO

Rumor

Unverified information that is transmitted from person to person. Rumors are neither inherently good nor bad. They can be true, false or partly true.

Source: CDAC Network

Sensitive Data

Personal data which, if disclosed, could result in discrimination against or repression of the individual concerned. Typically, data relating to health, race or ethnicity, religious/political/armed group affiliation and genetic and biometric data are considered sensitive. All sensitive data requires augmented protection, even though different types of data falling under this category may be more or less sensitive. Given the situations in which humanitarian organizations work, and the risk that some data elements could give rise to discrimination, categorizing sensitive is not meaningful. Sensitivity of data and appropriate safeguards (e.g. technical and organizational security measures) must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Source: ICRC

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

Acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering; threats of such acts; coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that target individuals or groups on the basis of their gender.

Source: UNHCR

Social Media

Websites and apps that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube, etc).

Source: UNHCR

Third Party Provider   Any natural or legal person other than the data subject, UNHCR or an Implementing Partner. Examples of third parties are national governments, international governmental or non-governmental organizations, private sector entities or individuals.

Source: UNHCR

Trafficking (human)   The organized illegal movement of people for profit. The critical additional factor that distinguishes trafficking from migrant smuggling is the use of force, coercion and/or deception throughout or at some stage in the process, with the intent to exploit. While the aspects of trafficking as opposed to smuggling may sometimes be obvious, often they are difficult to prove without investigation.

Source: UNHCR

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Chapter 1

Social Media Situation Analysis

Introduction

This guide is intended for UNHCR staff and partners implementing a Community-Based Approach using Social Media. It should be read and applied by protection staff interested in how Social Media can enhance protection outcomes, including improving participation, engagement, transparency, outreach and advocacy.

This chapter looks at how to analyze a situation to understand if Social Media is right for your project goals and how it can be used. It covers the stages of the Community-Based Approach as it applies to Social Media, beginning with Situation Analysis and progressing to Stakeholder Analysis and Participatory Assessments.

Generally speaking, Situation Analysis enables humanitarian workers and the community to understand the context of a displacement or crisis in order to determine the best course of action, prioritize work and plan operations to deliver protection effectively. It is a crucial step in Results-Based Management, as it informs project design and the formulation of objectives and anticipated results.[1] Here we explain how to apply Situation Analysis specifically for Social Media in the context of Community Based-Protection.

Analysis of the Social Media context can be undertaken through:

- **A Desk Review** of existing information, including data gathered about the population's communication channels in general and digital preferences in particular, and existing actors/systems;[2]

- **A Stakeholders' Analysis**, which involves identifying the different stakeholders to learn about their interests and priorities, and mapping their activities, resources and expertise;[3]

- **A Participatory Assessment** with different members of the population to understand their Social Media habits, trust, digital protection risks and protection risks when accessing digital channels as well as their capacities and proposals; also to test the validity of the existing information and analysis;[4]

- **A Participatory Planning Process.** Working together, all actors should compile and analyze the information to identify the protection risks and discuss proposed solutions and resource implications. They can then determine priorities, programs and budgets and prepare action plans.[5]

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1   UNHCR, A Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations, 2008
2   Section 3.1.1 of the UNHCR, Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008
3   Section 3.1.2 of the UNHCR, Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008
4   Section 3.1.4 of the UNHCR, Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008
5   Section 3.1.4 of the UNHCR, Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008

1. Desk Review

> ❗ **Important**
>
> The use of Social Media for any issue, be it protection, education or advocacy, requires UNHCR to work across different units, such as CBP, Public Information, ICT, Information Management, Innovation, Digital Engagement, Data Protection and where necessary, LAS. Make sure you contact these units, including at the regional level, to find out what capacities UNHCR already has to support you and what skills, models or existing projects you can pick up from the organization.

This first step of the Situation Analysis[6] helps determine what is already known about how Persons of Concern access and use Social Media. The Desk Review, also known as the Secondary Data Review (SDR), aims to gather information about, for example, the actors present in the social media landscape, the legal framework for data protection and privacy in the country, data being collected by Social Media and mobile operators in the communication process and any risks to users' rights and safety.

A Social Media Desk Review should be based on the following:

- **External resources from credible sources.**[7] Often there is not much information on PoCs' access to Social Media or communication channels in general. So take a look at any public information on the internet that could give you a sense of the level of access to Social Media, risks and government regulations that might affect the use of Social Media for protection.

> 📋 **Factsheet**
>
> See Factsheet 1 for a list of possible reliable online sources that can help you understand the technology and internet ecosystem in a given country, and use it to find additional credible sources locally, e.g. think tanks, research centers, government and donors.

- **Internal UNHCR and partners' resources.** UNHCR has a number of resources that can be used to support broader research on internet usage, connectivity and Social Media, such as External

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6   Section 3.1 of the UNHCR, A Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008

7   For more information and templates on how to conduct a SDR and assess the credibility of data and sources, see ACAPS Technical Brief on Secondary Data, 2014 and UNHCR's, Needs Assessment Handbook, 2017.

Relations, Public Information, ICT, Information Management, UNHCR Innovation, Digital Engagement and Data Protection. In addition, UNHCR partners are increasingly using Social Media to implement their protection activities and can provide data and lessons learned on the subject.

- **Qualitative and quantitative observation of Social Media behavior.[8]** The best way to understand what is happening on Social Media and where specific groups may look and/or find the information they need, is simply to start navigating Social Media. Begin with the official UNHCR account of a country office and understand who goes there and who does not. What do people post and what questions do they ask? Partners' Social Media accounts are also a good starting point.[9] This exercise can help in understanding the challenges that Persons of Concern may encounter, which UNHCR can help with.[10]

📖 Resources

UNHCR, Needs Assessment Handbook, 2017

Consult pages 73–78 of the UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook for guidance on Secondary Data Reviews, including validation criteria to assess the level of trust in secondary data. The Handbook also includes a full guidance note on Secondary Data Reviews, as well as checklists and reporting templates (see the SDR section of the Guidance and Resource Documents Tab).
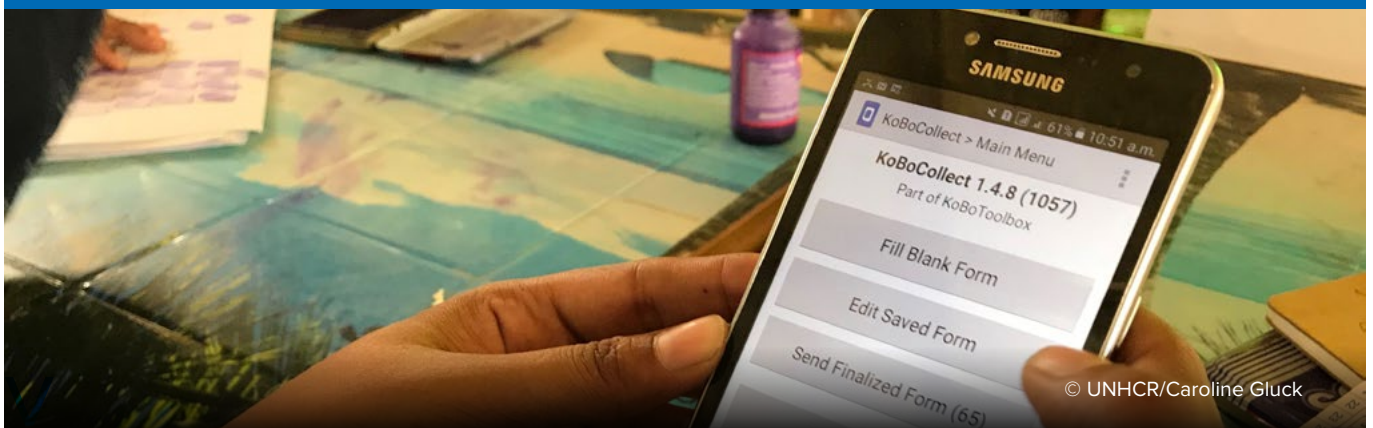
© UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

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8   UNHCR, Understanding Information Ecosystems: Making it happen, 2020
9   Remember, this exercise is not done to "spy" on what PoCs are saying online but to understand how they are already using Social Media.
10   This search will only show you public information channels or accounts, not closed groups.

2. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Analysis[11] involves identifying all individuals or groups active on Social Media who might be affected by a particular issue or action. The subject can influence the online narrative with consequences in the real world, so they have an interest in discussing it and being part of future planning.

Factsheet

See Factsheet 8 to learn more about influencers.

Protection workers may want to consider the following stakeholders for a Social Media Stakeholder Analysis:

UNHCR	UNHCR online products, such as UNHCR country websites and Social Media accounts, as well as help.unhcr.org can show what issues people want to discuss, what impact online conversations have on the UNHCR mandate and what protection issues UNHCR can influence on Social Media.
UNHCR partners	Operational and implementing partners, as well as other UN agencies that may use Social Media for protection, outreach or advocacy.
National civil society organizations	These include: 1. Civil society (local NGOs, women's groups, human rights groups) may use Social Media to advance their mission. 2. Host communities may use Social Media to discuss their challenges and needs.

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11 Find more on Situation Analysis and how to conduct it in Section 3.1.2 of UNHCR's, A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations, 2008 and on UNHCR's Learning and Connect on Protection in Mixed Movements of Refugees and Migrants, Module 5: Situation Analysis of Mixed Movements of Refugees and Migrants, section 5.3.

National Government	Ministries, such as the Ministry of Information, may have data, reports and statistics to help you understand the information ecosystem in the country.
Online communities	These include: 1. Communities that only exist online and have no representatives on the ground (This may be a group of refugees from the same country but hosted in different countries, who create their own Facebook page to share information about their country of origin). 2. Online communities that reflect actual communities (e.g. a Facebook page for refugees living in a specific settlement).
Diaspora	Diaspora groups may use Social Media to connect with family back in the country of origin. Often the Diaspora influences narratives and conversations outside the country of origin and can influence conflict dynamics on the ground.
Influencers	Influencers may be celebrities, national influencers or "YouTubers" with a big following. These may or may not be trustworthy.
National and Local media	National and local media often have Social Media pages and can become public platforms to discuss topics of the day, including migrants and human rights.
Persons of Concern	POCs may create and manage their own Social Media accounts (e.g, a Facebook group) to share information about their situation, services available, resources, etc. They may also be engaged through other stakeholder groups (i.e. influencers, civil society organizations).
Social Media Platforms	Platforms themselves have been increasingly under pressure to develop governance mechanisms that deal with inter alia issues of hate speech, misinformation, and privacy protection. The effectiveness/extent of these mechanisms varies significantly between platforms.

The Stakeholder Analysis should identify stakeholders and map their activities online. It should assess the reliability of the information they share and their level of influence. Then you can decide with whom to work in future.[12]

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12   See Chapter 8 of the OHCHR, Manual of Human Rights Monitoring, 2011 for guidance about actor mapping (pp. 24–30).

Resources

UNHCR, Stakeholder Mapping and Assessment Tool, 2018
The main UNHCR tool for stakeholder mapping is the Stakeholder Mapping and Assessment Tool (Attachment 1, pages 10–12) that forms part of the supporting notes for operations developing a multi-year multi-partner strategy.

UNHCR, Multi-Year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy, 2018
The UNHCR template for multi-year multi-partner protection and solutions strategy, which is crucial when applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), includes a section on the stakeholder mapping tool. It also provides guidance on definitions and process, practical tips, reference materials and a template for undertaking a Stakeholder Analysis.

© UNHCR/Luca Zanetti

3. Participatory Assessments

A participatory assessment is a process of building partnerships with community members of all ages and backgrounds through meaningful dialogue. It allows protection workers to gather information to grasp protection issues and risks, and decide priorities for action. At the same time, community capacities and resources to prevent protection risks and find solutions can be jointly identified and the responsibilities of external stakeholders clarified. Consult with communities prior to undertaking any assessment exercise, offline or online.

✎ Tips

Before conducting your participatory assessment, do a desk review to ensure you do not collect information already available. Think through how your findings can be safely shared to support action by the wider response community, particularly with key decision makers. Every UNHCR operation works in contexts with different actors and sensitivities, so it is important to think about the most appropriate approach. Regardless of what is decided, it is important to analyze the information carefully to avoid anecdotal or sensationalist claims. To facilitate data collection (assuming mobile data collection is appropriate), UNHCR encourages the use of tools such as Kobo Toolbox, which can run off even the most basic smart phones and tablets. See here for more information about using Kobo Toolbox for data collection and here for technical guidance and tips.

On page twenty nine, you have three types of assessments and accompanying tools. The tools are used not only to conduct surveys but also for observation, focus group discussions, semi-structured discussions and Key Informants' Interviews (KIIs). These assessments will form the basis for structured discussions with PoCs of all ages and backgrounds, giving them a chance to explain the protection risks they face on Social Media and to participate in designing programmatic responses to issues affecting them.

📖 Resource

UNHCR, Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations, 2006 - currently being reviewed (as of Nov 2020).

This Tool is the product of collaborative efforts by UNHCR staff and partners in the field and at headquarters in Geneva. The Tool consists of ten steps to help multifunctional teams in preparing, conducting and following up on a participatory assessment. This in turn gets us ready for participatory planning workshops with persons of concern, implementing partners and other key actors.

© UNHCR/Hélène Caux

The choice between these three assessment types depends on the time and resources available and the scenario (context and crisis stage).

Types	Scenario	Duration	Resources	Components
Rapid Information Needs Assessment[13]	• Sudden emergency; • The demographic of a place changes considerably due to sudden events; • Little time available and urgent need of assessment results.	• Quickest way to find out the basic information (15 days); • Can be incorporated into the Multi Sector/ Cluster Initial Rapid assessment (MIRA) assessment, if one is being carried out.	• Assessment manager; • Focus group moderators; • Enumerators; • Data analyst.	• Participatory design (rapid) • Pre-designed survey; • Focus group discussions; • KIIs.
Information Needs Assessment (INA)	• Protracted situation or long-term emergency setting; • Non-emergency setting.	• Full assessment conducted in around one to two months; • Can be conducted in collaboration with other partners.	• Assessment manager; • Enumerators • Focus groups moderators; • Data analyst and design.	• Participatory design; • Surveys; • KIIs; • Observation; • Focus group discussions; • Semi-structured discussions.
Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA)	• Protracted emergency or long-term emergency setting; • Non-emergency setting; • Long-term development settings.	• Full assessment conducted in around six to twelve months; • Should be conducted with the support of knowledge experts.	• Human-centered design technical support; • Assessment manager; • Enumerators • Focus groups moderators; • Data analyst	• Participatory design; • Surveys; • KIIs; • Observation; • Focus group discussions; • Semi-structured discussions; • Ethnographic methods, e.g shadowing and mirroring.

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13   Find more information on Needs Assessments on the UNHCR, Needs Assessment Handbook, 2017

I.   Rapid Information Needs Assessment

A rapid information needs assessment will help you determine if the community you want to engage is using digital tools. If so, which of these tools they are using? Who is using them and how? What concerns do they have? Within the constraints of resources and time, direct consultations with the community should be conducted to determine what information people are accessing when using Social Media. Relevant questions to ask include:

- How are they accessing information (in closed or open groups?) and in what format?
- Whom do they contact and whom do they trust?
- Is there scope for UNHCR and partners to provide added value? [14]

📖 Resources

Rapid Information and Communication Needs Assessment Tool, developed by the CDAC network

Members of the CDAC Network have cooperated to develop common tools to assess information and the communication needs of communities affected by disasters. This guide is aimed at staff working in humanitarian response. It suggests steps they can take to enhance communication with and among communities at different stages of an emergency. Five key questions are put forward, with reasons why these questions should be asked. Agencies are guided on how they could act on data to improve communication in humanitarian responses.

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14   Rapid Assessments can also be incorporated or embedded into CBP Assessments, MIRA Assessments or any other Rapid Assessments done.

II.   Information and Communication Needs Assessment (INA)

An INA helps you determine which Social Media the community is using and how, and what concerns they have.[15]

An INA normally looks at:
- Information sources and habits;
- Means of communication used or preferred;
- Trusted sources;
- Access to sources of information and information channels.

By conducting the assessment with different methods from surveys to community meetings, KII and focus group discussions, the INA can help you understand:
- How people are accessing information (in closed or open groups);
- The level of people's understanding about the possible risks of using Social Media, and their concerns about these risks (if any);
- The existence of online groups/communities that are not necessarily connected to specific or homogenous groups on the ground.

Resources

UNHCR, Information and Communication Needs Assessment Tool

In order to help UNHCR field operations and other humanitarian response organizations to undertake information and communication needs assessments, the UNHCR Innovation Service has developed a 'question bank' that can be downloaded, adapted and used by operations across a number of mobile data collection tools. This tool is built on information and communication needs assessments by actors such as the CDAC Network, ACAPS and Internews, as detailed in this blog.

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15   Media development agencies coined the term 'Information and Communication Needs'. They highlighted the importance of understanding information gaps, the prevalence or absence of different communication channels, levels of literacy, trust in different channels and more. By getting a grasp of this, humanitarian responders can ensure people are receiving the timely, accurate and applicable information they need. Determining the appropriate channels of communication for various demographic groups and investing in them can help communities communicate safely and securely with whomever they need, be it Diaspora, separated family members or humanitarian agencies. Dialogue with the latter helps understand feedback and complaints that can steer a humanitarian response.

III. Information Ecosystem Assessments

An information ecosystem assessment[16] encompasses both a review of the media and telecommunication infrastructures and people's information and communication needs, alongside an analysis of the producers of information. Multiple aspects must be considered to provide an all-round analysis of an information ecosystem, including possible weaknesses in the physical infrastructure and the power dynamics behind the media discourse and its effects on communities.

The term "ecosystem" encapsulates the link between PoCs' different information sources and needs, and how information can flow within and amongst communities. Any impact on the ecosystem can have broader ramifications – from changes in the telecoms regulatory frameworks to how a specific community group communicates remotely with humanitarian agencies.[17]

Resources

Internews, Mapping Information Ecosystem to Support Resilience Tool, 2015

In 2015 Internews produced this Tool to support decision makers in understanding how information contributes to a more connected and resilient community. Whether the community is defined by place, population, issue or a mix of these, a good understanding of a community's information needs and use is essential to design effective, responsive systems and programs.

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16 Note that an 'Information Ecosystem' is different from what information management refers to as 'information landscape', which includes a review of the data actors in a given context and the data/information they generate. This type of secondary data review aims to avoid duplicating primary data collection when establishing evidence for action.

17 In May 2015, Internews released 'Why information matters?', which aims to synthesize an understanding of information and communication ecosystems in one document – summarized in this infographic. Before undertaking an assessment, it is recommended to read this publication and look at a number of the different guides – like the aforementioned CDAC Network resources – and assessments produced by different media development agencies and other humanitarian actors.

4. Participatory Analysis and Planning

a) Participatory Analysis

Once you have collected information through your desk review, stakeholder analysis and/or participatory assessment, you need to compile, organize and analyze the information together with stakeholders to identify the most urgent protection risks and discuss possible solutions, and get a consensus on priorities.

This element of your social media situation analysis is jointly taken by all protection workers and stakeholders, including communities, in order to generate more comprehensive and accurate findings. It is supported by triangulation methods that involve comparing and complementing your situation analysis data with additional sources of information.

Factsheet

See Factsheet 2 for examples of information and context analysis that will inform your decision on whether or not to set up Social Media protection projects.

The participatory analysis must enable the identification of PoCs' issues and priorities, disaggregated by age, gender, and other diversity characteristics. It is important to recognize the 'digital divide' in any community to understand who is using Social Media and who may be excluded from interventions.

This element of the social media situation analysis will also help identify vulnerabilities and any unintended consequences of using Social Media for protection.

📖 **Resource**

OHCHR, Manual of Human Rights Monitoring, 2011 - Chapter 8: ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the importance of carefully analyzing various aspects of problems related to civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights. It highlights the need to understand the actors that can have an impact on solutions, in the short, medium and long term. The chapter proposes a step-by-step model for approaching complex human rights problems, which will guide both the field presence in it's development of strategies, as well as individual HROs.

b) Participatory Planning

Participatory planning brings together the relevant stakeholders, including persons of concern and affected populations to determine how the findings of the situation analysis can be used to inform planning, notably planning for a Social Media component in a CBP programme. Based on the findings of the social media situation analysis, stakeholders now identify common goals and CBP actions, as well as stakeholders with rights or obligations in the online sphere.

The capacities and contributions of the community and other stakeholders on Social Media can be assessed jointly to determine what areas are adequately covered and what gaps exist. The final outcome should include any budgetary requirements and agreements on what will be done to meet these and by whom. Also, mitigating measures to address any identified gaps and risks[18] should be agreed, and who will be involved in implementing them.

📋 **Factsheet**

See Factsheet 3 for examples of information that can help you in your Participatory Planning.

Participatory planning concludes the situation analysis and links the findings of the assessments to the design of the program or project. These outcomes will vary in format, depending on the type of Social Media tool(s) used and the goals of the project.

To improve your project design, you can use the UNHCR, Rights-Based Results Framework that facilitates a systematic approach to planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting. The framework has a hierarchy of pre-defined goals, rights groups, objectives and outputs – as well as standardized indicators to measure achievements against objectives. UNHCR's budget structure strictly ties resource allocation to expected results.

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18   See more in Chapter 2: Risk Assessment

Resources

UNHCR, A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008

More information about participatory planning and how to conduct it can be found in Section 3.1.5 of the UNHCR, Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008.

Messaging Apps [19]

During your situation analysis you will also find information about the use of Mobile Apps by PoCs. Often this data is only available by doing a dedicated assessment. But some information on ownership of mobile phones and use of Mobile Apps can be gathered by adding questions to MIRA's Assessments or by adding questions to the annual participatory planning process.

When looking at the use of Messaging Apps to inform project design, some important factors must be kept in mind:

- Apps often require people to be added to a channel or invited. This means people use these Apps in a personal way and expect personal interactions. Try to avoid using Messaging Apps to send bulk messages but rather focus on dedicated and personalized systems;
- Messaging Apps are often used in closed networks and closed groups. This means that while people may say they use them, they may not be willing to use them to communicate with people they don't know. Make sure you find out how people are using Messaging Apps and whom or what they trust;
- Different cultures use Messaging Apps in different ways, and this is relevant when it comes to deciding the format of your content. Don't assume people consume content in the same way you do. For example, some people use WhatsApp or WeChat for audio messages while others use it mostly for written texts.
- As with Social Media generally, literacy, security, availability of electricity and possession of a smart phone are all factors determining whether a refugee is likely to use Messaging Apps.
- UNHCR has no control over the collection of personal data and metadata by the service providers of Messaging Apps, or their terms and conditions. When considering using Messaging Apps, UNHCR must make sure PoCs are aware of the risks associated with each platform and that they make an informed decision to use the App.[20]

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19 See more on this topic in the next Chapter.
20 See more on this topic in the next Chapter.

Resourcing

Before you decide to set up community-based protection projects using Social Media, or to use Social Media for engagement with communities, you should have a clear idea of what resources you will need to establish, manage and continue these activities. The situation analysis in itself takes resources, time and skills. It will be the foundation of your entire protection strategy using Social Media.

Below are some considerations for understanding the resources you will need to conduct an in-depth situation analysis:

Invest in technical knowledge

Even if you rely on existing resources for your situation analysis, make sure you invest in supporting skills and knowledge from across UNHCR and partners. Avoid outdated assessments and do not apply general statistics about the overall population to persons of concern. Rather, use your stakeholders' mapping to consider what specialized skills/capacities your staff and partners might have, making sure they match your vision.

Work across the organization

Make sure you involve all relevant UNHCR staff and units:
1. IMOs in the field and regional bureaux will be able to advise on issues related to processes, methods and tools for data collection; likewise on processing, ensuring anonymity, curation, analysis, visualization, storage, sharing, as well as data protection and security;
2. The Digital Engagement section in HQ can provide support on the existing challenges and status of UNHCR engagement with PoCs online;
3. The Innovation Service can provide knowledge and training both on how to conduct information needs assessments for Social Media and examples of other UNHCR projects involving Social Media;
4. Data Controllers, Data Protection Focal Points, DPO in Regional DIMA and DPO in HQ can give advice and support on data protection and guidance on conducting a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA).

Avoid duplication and waste of resources

Avoid duplication with solutions available locally. Use your desk review and stakeholders' mapping results to identify not only gaps but also resources that could be tapped into, e.g, via a joint initiative. Avoid developing something from scratch if it has already been developed by UNHCR (or others) somewhere else and could simply be adapted for local use.

Listen first

While you can and should use third party information, if you decide to implement a project it is strongly suggested that you conduct some sort of assessment, even if only remotely. If a communication or CBP project is set up according to the preoccupations of humanitarian organizations rather than the preferences of the communities we work with, it is doomed to fail.

Aim at community ownership

Use your situation analysis to establish from the outset how persons of concern, partners and volunteers could own the project and eventually manage it for themselves. If you know your funding will not sustain the project/activity long-term, have an exit plan. Often digital systems can be "handed over" to existing networks or organizations but this requires forward planning.

Strengthen national capacity

Rely on persons of concern, national staff and volunteers and partners to help you understand the Social Media ecosystem and to identify the best actors to carry out protection activities on Social Media. When you work with PoCs to design Social Media activities, you provide ownership and build capacity to use these tools.[21]

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21 So far Social Media projects that PoCs have been managing themselves with the support of UNHCR (as in Lebanon) have not been UNHCR-branded. For UNHCR branding, additional factors must be considered on a case by case basis.

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

DO check in with your public information/external relations team in-country to coordinate with them and get an understanding of the Social Media presence UNHCR already has in the country (nationally or sub-nationally) and/or in the region.

DO NOT create Social Media channels if you mean to publish information for Persons of Concern without allowing them to respond or interact with you. There are already plenty of other tools for that.

DO take time to understand how the community uses Social Media through AGD-sensitive consultations and assessments.

DO NOT assume you know who you will be reaching on Social Media and who will be willing to talk to you.

DO use online resources to gather as much information as you can about the digital landscape in the country, including existing legal frameworks and safeguards.

DO NOT use information from third parties (and secondary data more generally) as a stepping stone for your project without assessing and verifying them.

DO rely on local partner staff, volunteers, community groups and refugee leaders to get an idea of who is using Social Media and the opportunities and risks.

DO NOT assume that even if people have access to Social Media, they use it the same way you do, or have the same perspective of the risks involved.

DO actively look for groups that may be under-represented and make sure you have other two-way channels of communication to reach these people.

DO NOT assume that just because there is low digital penetration in a given place, Social Media will not work for you. Weigh your decision on the balance between the "Do No Harm" principle and our mandate to protect.

Check List

Do you know what you want to achieve by engaging with communities on Social Media?
[If not, go no further!]

Have you identified and involved all the different UNHCR units you can work with, in the country, regional bureaux and at HQ?

Do you know who is using which digital tools in your targeted population? Can you access AGD-disaggregated data about this usage?

Do you have a clear idea of the risks and weaknesses of the technical infrastructure and legal framework/safeguards in the country?[22]

Do you have a grasp of privacy, data protection and other protection risks to PoCs that use of Social Media would entail (e.g. risk of profiling or trolling)?[23]

Have you identified with all stakeholders the main protection needs on Social Media? Who are the main actors and what role can UNHCR play?

Do you have the minimum resources required to create and sustain engagement on your Social Media platforms?

22   See more in Chapter 2: Risk Assessment
23   See more in Chapter 2: Risk Assessment

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Related Case Studies

- [UNHCR assessment from FYR of Macedonia during the Mediterranean refugee crisis, April 2016](#)

- [UNHCR Inter-agency assessments Understanding the Information and Communication Needs among IDPs in Northern Iraq, August 2014](#)

- [UNHCR and IFRC, Regional Information and Communication Needs Assessment; Understanding the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants in the Venezuela Situation, November 2019](#)

- [UNHCR, Survey on the information needs and communication channels used by refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey, 2018/2019](#)

Chapter 2

Risk Assessment

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how to get a preliminary understanding of the risks associated with using Social Media for Community-Based Protection. It covers the various steps of a CBP Social Media Risk Assessment, from understanding the risks to finding mitigation strategies.

Resources

- UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR

- UNHCR, Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR

- UNHCR, Data Protection Impact Assessment Template

- ICRC, Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2nd edition 2020

- ICRC & Privacy International, The Humanitarian Metadata Problem: Doing No Harm in the Digital Era, 2018

While the choice of platform will depend on the preferences of the persons of concern in any given operational context, the decision should be balanced with detailed Risk Assessment.

The use of Social Media for protection brings considerable risks that must be evaluated, taking into account UNHCR's duty to protect, respect of the "Do No Harm"[24] principle and commitment to a rights-based approach.

Risks associated with Social Media can be grouped as follows:
1. Risk to persons of concern, including local host communities (to their safety, security and fundamental human rights, including access to asylum and freedom from refoulement, access to essential services and privacy);
2. Risk to UNHCR and partners' staff; and
3. Risk to UNHCR as an organization.

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24 See also RAND Corporation,Crossing the Digital Divide Applying Technology to the Global Refugee Crisis, by Shelly Culbertson, James Dimarogonas, Katherine Costello, Serafina Lanna, 2019

This chapter focuses on risks to persons of concern and host communities. UNHCR staffers are expected to know how to protect themselves and partners, and UNHCR as an organization, from risks associated with using Social Media, also covering aspects such as ICTs and information technology. The same methods you use yourself will apply when using Social Media for protection.

The risk sssessment looks at the roots of these risks, as follows:

01	Risks related to POCs' personal data
02	Risks related to the platform
03	Risks related to the regulatory environment and national laws
04	Risks related to the behavior of the user
05	Risks related to malicious third-party groups/individuals

Remember that UNHCR has a wealth of resources to help you navigate these issues. The table below shows some of them.

> **! Important**
>
> For risks associated with UNHCR staff, partners and UNHCR as organization, if the UNHCR country operation has a risk management officer or equivalent, they are good entry point, alongside the operation's Data Controller. At regional level risk staff, external relations, ICT, DIMA and innovation staff are available to guide and advise, alongside the same functions at HQ level.

Resources:

UNHCR/HCP/2020/2 Policy on Enterprise Risk Management. The policy is to establish Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) in UNHCR, bridging various risk management policies and formal/informal practices.

UNHCR/AI/2014/22 Administrative Instruction and Procedures for Implementation of Enterprise Risk Management in UNHCR. This defines instructions and procedures for implementing ERM in UNHCR in line with the relevant policy.

Risk to UNHCR and partners

The risks for UNHCR staff and partners relate to digital security. Physical security may be an issue, for example if someone is associated with UNHCR because of their Social Media activity and targeted as a result; or the security of the data and information handled by UNHCR and partners, such as PoCs' personal data is compromised.

UNHCR, Operational Guidance on ICT Security. This document explains UNHCR's policy for the secure management of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), including third party risks, risks related to assets and infrastructure, physical security and ICT security incidents management.

Risk to UNHCR as organization

Most risks associated with UNHCR as an organization, aside from privacy and data security, are of a reputational nature, related to how people see or interpret what we say on Social Media. This is normally something handled by the External Relations office.

Administrative Instructions on the Use of Social Media. This defines responsibilities for the use of Social Media by UNHCR personnel and outlines principles that should inform posts to social networks. It is for all UNHCR staff (including affiliate workforce) using Social Media in a personal or professional capacity. It should inform any use of online social networks for publishing or sharing text, photos, video, audio or other digital content.

Data protection risks for UNHCR and partners

Data protection and humanitarian action should be compatible and complement each other. Data protection principles should never be interpreted in a way that hampers essential humanitarian work but rather serves to further its objectives, namely safeguarding the life, integrity and dignity of victims of emergencies.

The ICRC, Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2nd edition 2020, builds on procedures and practices that have been established in humanitarian action in the most volatile environments, for the benefit of victims of armed conflict, other violence, natural disasters, pandemics and other emergencies (together "Humanitarian Emergencies"). Some of these procedures and practices pre-date the development of data protection laws but they all are based on the principle of human dignity and the same concept of protection that underpins data protection law.

1. Understanding Social Media Risks for Refugees

Along with exciting opportunities to engage communities, Social Media brings with it a number of risks and protection concerns. While it is impossible to predict and deal with all of them, knowing the risks helps us choose policies, standard procedures and actions that will identify, prevent, manage and mitigate the problems, as far as possible.

Keeping abreast of the risks and weaknesses of technology[25] is not easy and often persons of concern use it without knowing what implications there might be for their privacy and/or digital security. Increasingly criminal groups, such as smugglers or traffickers, and/or state actors[26] hack or spy on conversations taking place on Social Media or mobile phones. Some are becoming very cunning at setting up online scams and traps.

> ## ! Important
>
> When engaging communities on Social Media, do not collect personal data unless there is a good reason to do so. Purpose specification, necessity and proportionality are at the heart of data protection principles, without which one cannot be compliant.[27]

The technology used for the construction and maintenance of Social Media (e.g. encryption, retention period, rights for a data subject to withdraw consent etc.) affects the protection of data and privacy. A wider protection assessment needs to consider risks arising from the way Social Media platforms are used, or planned to be used, as well as the protection environment (risk of profiling of particular groups, trolling, existing legal regulatory framework and safeguards or lack thereof).

The best way to understand Social Media risks in a given context is to start with a desk review of existing studies and reports by privacy, data protection and cyber security watchdogs. Consult partners and technical experts who work on digital engagement, cyber-security and Social Media. Also hold discussions and AGD-sensitive consultations with the communities.

The second step is to work with the data controller to conduct a data mapping and a DPIA.

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25 Ibid.

26 See here and here for more information about the use of surveillance by state actors

27 See: UNHCR, Guidance on the protection of personal data of persons of concern to UNHCR, paras. 4.1, 4.2 ,2018; Art 29 Working Group opinion on purpose limitation, 2013.

I. Assessing risks related to POCs' personal data: Data Protection Impact Assessment

Often the likeliest risks for persons of concern on Social Media are associated with sharing personally identifiable information. A recent study concluded that persons of concern expressed privacy and data protection concerns when engaging digitally due to their legal status and personal background.[28] Ample research on privacy and data protection infringements shows that the use of Social Media entails significant data protection risks.[29] The dangers and malicious actors associated with social media are multiple, ranging from targeted social engineering attacks to state-backed surveillance using commercially available spyware. For example, the geo-location of vulnerable people is a worry, as is the collection of information that may allow victims of gender-based violence to be identified.[30]

For this reason, the risks related to data protection fall directly under the "Do No Harm" principle. The UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR (DPP) lays down rules and principles relating to the processing of persons of concern's personal data[31] and is complemented by Operational Guidance (DPG) that further expands on its implementation, supervision and accountability. The DPP applies to all personal data of persons of concern held by UNHCR. The processing of other data, e.g. aggregated or anonymous data, does not fall within the scope of DPP but is covered among other things, by UNHCR's Information Classification, Handling and Disclosure Policy

According to UNHCR's DPP, "when elaborating new systems, projects or policies or before entering into data transfer arrangements with implementing partners or third parties, which may negatively impact on the protection of personal data of persons of concern, UNHCR needs to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)."[32]

A DPIA would contain a general description of the envisaged system, project, policy or data sharing arrangement involving the processing of personal data. There would also be an analysis of the risks to the rights of data subjects in view of the circumstances and nature of the personal data processed; and the safeguards, security and other measures in place or proposed to ensure compliance with this policy.[33]

Keep in mind that under the DPP, "new technologies or systems, tools, modules or data processing platforms which are perceived or expected to carry inherent privacy risks should, as a matter of principle, undergo a DPIA. This includes for example two-way communication using Social Media, smart phones or bulk SMS.[34]

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28 Incidents reported include profiling and targeting of the Tibetan Diaspora through WhatsApp; spywares used against political dissidents outside of country of origin and targeting asylum seekers.

29 Incidents reported include social engineering attacks such as phishing employed via messaging apps (targeting of Tibetan diaspora via Whatsapp) profiling and targeting of the Tibetan Diaspora through WhatsApp); commercially available spyware used against political dissidents outside of country of origin and for targeting asylum seekers; as well as new vulnerabilities that are being regularly discovered and patched in major messaging services (eg. Whatsapp)

30 See more on the ICRC Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020

31 It is consistent with 2018 UN High Level Committee on Management Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles, and other international instruments concerning the protection of personal data and individuals' privacy.

32 UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015

33 UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015

34 UNHCR, Guidance on the protection of personal data of persons of concern, 2018 (para. 8.2.3)

UNHCR firmly recommends that personal data is never collected on Social Media unless strictly necessary. Both user-based and platform-based risks associated with social media data collection should always be assessed, for example how the data disclosed by refugees on UNHCR's Social Media pages may be used by malicious actors.

UNHCR may often not be in a position to mitigate all risks associated with the use of Social Media platforms. Engaging PoCs through Social Media entails the use of platforms and services provided by a third party with whom UNHCR may often not have a contractual relationship nor oversight, particularly regarding their processing and sharing of users' personal data with other actors. Many of these platforms are not open source, as a result of which there is limited transparency and public oversight on the data collection and sharing by the platform service providers.

In most cases where personal data of PoCs on a Social Media platform is processed by UNHCR, the technological aspect of it is under limited control of UNHCR due to absence of formalized data sharing arrangement with the platform provider (e.g. Facebook). Nevertheless, the DPIA should include an overview of all technical and procedural risks associated with the platform, and the technical and procedural mitigating measures available to UNHCR. The implications of data processing by UNHCR should always be considered carefully when determining what sort of intervention is most appropriate for engaging with communities through Social Media.

> ### 📖 Resource
>
> ICRC, Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2nd edition 2020 (Chapter 5 on Data Protection Impact Assessments - DPIA)

II.   Assessing risks related to Social Media platforms

Every type of Social Media platform has its own architecture, bias, weaknesses and data protection rules and regulations. To assess and understand these risks, you have to look at the specifics of the platforms you are considering.

Risks that are platform-related normally have to do with the software infrastructure, functionality and features of the platform itself. These risks can be related to the data privacy[35] and terms of use of each platform, the possibility of creating open and/or closed channels,[36] the possibility of encrypting content and/or the metadata generated and shared with third parties (including law enforcement and government authorities).

No platform will guarantee you can protect people from all risks but knowing the dangers will allow you to develop your Risk Assessment and work on mitigation measures to support partners and refugees in the safe use of Social Media.

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35 See more here.

36 See Chapter 3 Section 1 for more information about closed and open channels.

> ## 📖 Resources
>
> To explore some of the features and risks associated with different Social Media platforms, see the resources below:
> - UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015
> - UNHCR, Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR, 2015.
> - Chapter 3 of the ICRC Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action focuses on the use of Social Media by humanitarian organizations to communicate and engage with beneficiaries. The Handbook covers the use of Social Media to identify crises and improve the humanitarian response (Chapter 6: Data Analytics and Big Data.) For Messaging Apps, you can refer to Chapter 11: Mobile Messaging Apps.
> - Chapter 4 of the ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party, Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps, January 2017 addresses the issues humanitarian organizations face when communicating or exchanging information with local communities, and their responsibility to ensure no harm comes to PoCs. This section raises issues for consideration when organizations are assessing whether Messaging Apps can be used responsibly and effectively in a given situation.

III. Assessing Risks related to Physical Infrastructure and National Regulatory Frameworks

Every country has its own laws and regulatory systems that govern the use of ICT. This includes the ownership of the ICT infrastructure, the laws that regulate content and user rights on Social Media and the legal safeguards and recourse available.

In general, you will have to assess three categories of obstacles in any given country:[37]
- **Obstacles to Access** - Infrastructure and economic barriers to access; regulation of access; legal and ownership control over internet service providers and independence of regulatory bodies;
- **Limits on Content** - Legal regulations on content; technical filtering and blocking of websites; self-censorship; the vibrancy/diversity of online news media and the use of digital tools for civic mobilization;
- **Violations of User Rights[38]** - Surveillance and privacy; repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, harassment or cyber-attacks.[39]

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37 See details about how these three elements are assessed and what they include on Freedom on the Net, Freedom House's annual survey and analysis of internet and digital media freedom around the world. This project consists of research analysis, fact-based advocacy and on-the-ground capacity building.

38 For the purpose of this section of the chapter, "Users Rights" are defined as a subset of the so-called Human Rights on the Internet This refers to ways governments and non-state actors around the world restrict the rights of users online by means of surveillance, attacks to privacy and legal and non-legal repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, harassment or cyber-attacks.

39 This also includes lack of legal safeguards and recourse - e.g. is there any legal safeguard in case of misuse of personal data by the service providers?

📖 Resources

Council of Europe, Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users, Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)6 and Explanatory Memorandum, 2014

The Council of Europe recognizes that human rights apply equally on and offline. The guide to human rights for internet users explains in user-friendly terms the rights and freedoms guaranteed to internet users by the European Convention on Human Rights. The guide was designed to educate individual internet users on their online rights, as well as to encourage governments, public institutions and corporations to assume responsibility to protect human rights online. Read also the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on a Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users, the Explanatory Memorandum and Safeguarding Human Rights in the Net, Thematic Leaflet.

UNHCR must know about these risks, especially as they apply to the particular communities it works with, and weigh them against the protection outcomes expected from engaging with persons of concern on Social Media. Protecting them from possible violation of their rights is UNHCR's job.

📝 Factsheet

See Factsheet 2 for questions that can be asked to evaluate risks associated with physical infrastructure and national regulatory frameworks.
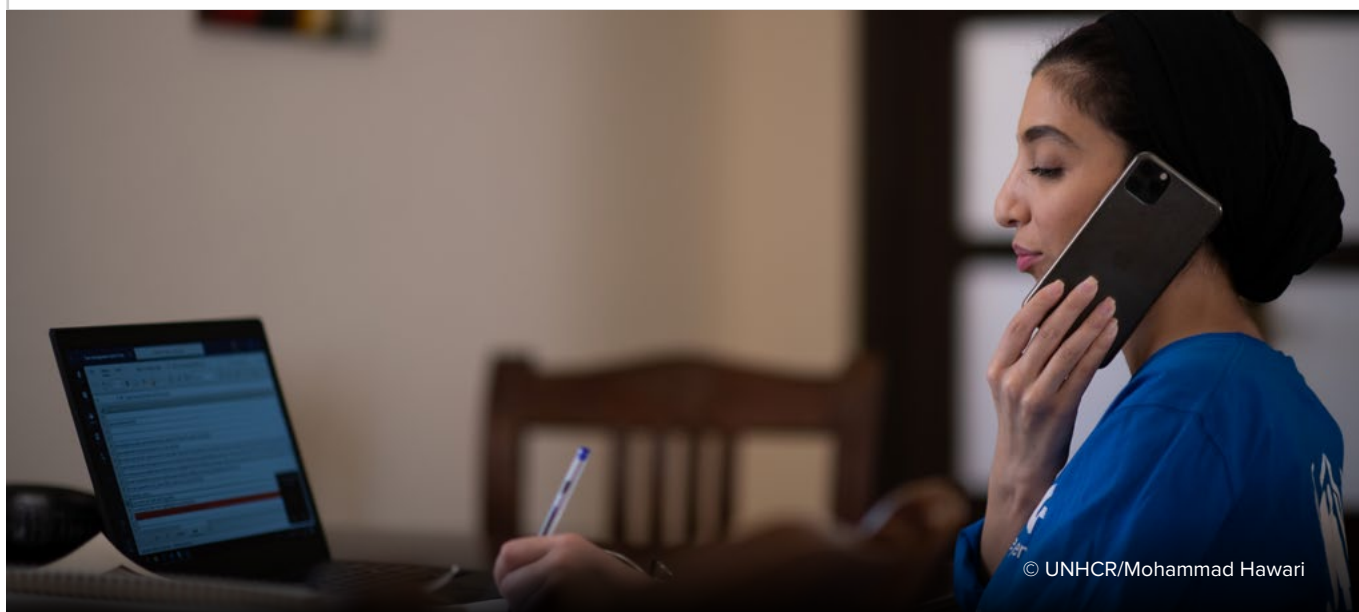
© UNHCR/Mohammad Hawari

IV. Assessing Risks related to Users' Behavior

Our responsibility to protect persons of concern extends to actions online, and they too must understand the risks and protect themselves. Often, privacy issues and terms of use and data handling are not clearly understood by Social Media users. Refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people may not have much control over IT security and handling ICT equipment, including computers and mobile phones, as they may share devices or use internet cafes. And in some cases, digital literacy can be low (as a whole or for certain AGD profiles within the group).

While UNHCR staff are trained to handle and protect themselves online, persons of concern may use these technologies differently, without enough awareness of the risks involved. The questions below can guide your community discussions to see what risks they perceive online, how they protect themselves and what gaps there might be.

Questions to understand risks associated with the behavior of users online

What do communities know about the risks of the online system they are using?

How familiar are they with the devices they are using and basic security hygiene such as anti-virus, firewall, PINs and password protection?

How familiar are they with anti-viruses, password best practices and general IT maintenance?

What access do they have to updated and verified information on how to protect themselves online?

What behaviors/habits do you notice that might lead to protection risks for them or their community? (Do they share too much identifiable information? Do they post pictures of minors or other protected groups? Do they post pictures of their ID documents?)

Are people of concern from different AGD groups, or with particular vulnerabilities, aware of the specific online risks they may face due to their identity?

V. Assessing Risks related to Third-party Malicious Actors

The risks associated with third-party malicious actors[40] come in two categories:

Malicious actors using Social Media in a legal way to violate PoCs' rights, for example with scams or manipulation to get them to disclose their personal information; political propaganda used to fuel conflict;

Malicious actors using illegal means such as malware infection, system compromise and social engineering attacks to harm persons of concern.

Recognizing these actors and their methods, and helping persons of concern to understand the risks, takes you a good way towards implementing effective mitigation. Exposure to harmful content, criminal networks or activities, abuse and safeguards are all covered later in this chapter.

Your assessment must investigate what types of malicious users are present on Social Media and online generally. What are the online scams? What online tools are criminals using to identify minors or other groups in order to take advantage of them? You may also want to look at groups that target specific persons of concern and find out if any groups or individuals use Social Media to spread hate, disinformation or violence.

> ! **Important**
>
> When looking at political propaganda or incitement to violence on Social Media, bear in mind that boundaries do not really exist on the internet. In the case of refugee situations, this means that information between PoCs in the country of arrival and malicious state or non-state actors in the country of origin travels instantaneously. Online recruitment, propaganda, disinformation and hate speech are just some of the risks PoCs may encounter online. During the Risk Assessment and on an ongoing basis, make sure to monitor and assess any discrimination or hate-fueled campaigns against PoCs on Social Media, or the presence of online 'insurgency' from the country of origin. Community members affiliated with political groups in the country of origin can fuel tension and conflict with their posts.

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40 Malicious actors include groups and individuals operating from the country of origin (COO) and country of arrival (COA).

2. Analyzing Risks

Once you have identified the Social Media risks, then analyzing these risks will help you understand their likelihood and the possible consequences for Persons of Concern, UNHCR and partners.

The starting point of your risk analysis is the balance between benefit and risk . This gives clarity of purpose (what is the value of using Social Media for protection?), before diving into the risks. Now you must look for ways to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks.

📖 Resource

PIM, Framework for Data Sharing in Practice , 2019
This Framework identifies the various components that are necessary to support the safe, purposeful and responsible sharing of information between actors involved in a protection response. One component is the Benefit and Risk Assessment, which aims to ensure that the benefits and risks of data sharing have been systematically and collaboratively assessed, and that actions have been identified to maximize benefits and minimize risk. Although this Framework is specific to data sharing, it can help you think about data-related risks more generally.

Social media risk analysis is a process that helps determine whether advanced prevention activities are required. It enables you to set up mitigation measures and define your contingency plans. It uses scenarios to measure the likelihood of specific events/behaviors and the impact they would have on people of concern. It must always be done with a Community-Based Approach to make sure all stakeholders, offline and online, are involved.[41]

The UNHCR Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE) promotes a standard three-step method for risk analysis, which can readily be applied to other situations and population groups:

Step One - Scenario(s) Identification: This process is led by community consultations, where UNHCR and/or partners discuss the risks identified in the first part of this chapter. Local partners and specialized partners who work on online rights, privacy and internet freedom will be particularly helpful when it comes to understanding the likelihood of certain risks materializing. Historical data on previous cyber-attacks or known cases of scams targeting Persons of Concern will also emerge.

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41   UNHCR, Emergency Handbook, Risk analysis and monitoring - refugee emergencies, accessed June 2020

Step Two - Risk Ranking: This process is more effective the more local partners and persons of concern are involved. Risk ranking depends on the local context and may vary over time according to a person's profile, or from location to location or topic to topic. The chances of being scammed online if you are a host community member may be low compared with those of an asylum seeker, for example. At this stage it will be important to use an AGD lens and make sure every group of the whole population you are planning to engage is involved in the ranking of risks associated with Social Media.

Step Three - Risk Monitoring and Early Warning: While neither UNHCR nor its partners can control how people use Social Media, we have the mandate and power to inform refugees of the risks and support them in protecting themselves. This means all protection personnel should keep up to date on how persons of concern use Social Media. How aware are they of the risks and what mitigation measures do they take?

📖 Resources

UNHCR, The Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE), A REFERENCE GUIDE FOR PREPAREDNESS, Version 3, 2020
The Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE) sets standards for preparing for refugee emergencies. It helps users to implement risk analysis, take minimum and advanced preparedness actions and conduct scenario-based contingency planning.

Find more information and links on how to conduct Risk Analysis and Monitoring in the UNHCR Emergency Handbook, Risk Analysis and Monitoring - Refugee Emergencies

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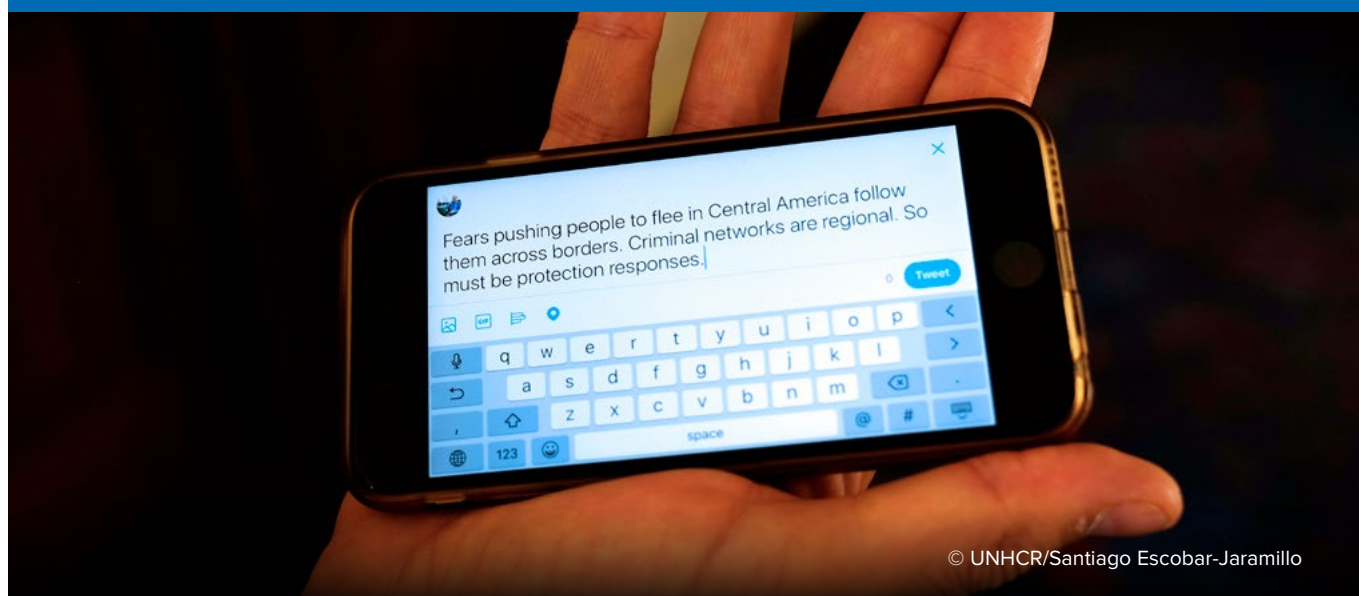
3 Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

> ## ❗ Important
>
> Remember that the risks of engaging with PoCs on Social Media always need to be weighed against the benefits and gains, but also against the risks of not engaging at all. Protection always comes first. Serious data protection and privacy risks could be a valid reason for seeking alternative means of engagement, when the risk posed by social media use cannot be sufficiently prevented or mitigated. However, might 'not engaging' also have negative repercussions? What is in the best interests of the person of concern?
>
> The risk assessment should be as community-based as possible, bearing in mind that UNHCR has the resources to conduct research and assess risks that are otherwise not visible to PoCs. If UNHCR decides to engage PoCs through a particular means, UNHCR owes them a duty of care to ensure the means selected are appropriate and accessible, as per the AGD Policy.

Systematic analysis of Social Media's risks helps operations decide what preventative and mitigation actions are required in each situation. Risks related to the use of Social Media need to be analyzed regularly (at least once a year) through consultation with stakeholders and the communities themselves, or whenever a change in the operational context warrants a review.

Knowing some of the factors above can help you understand how to address these risks. What education, outreach or advocacy campaign might you need to implement to support your work? A Community-Based Approach will ensure that all the actors who can influence and support the protection of refugees online are involved in the process.

Understanding how people use Social Media, and who and where malicious actors are, will help UNHCR and it's partners to develop response strategies. These could include digital literacy, digital security training and digital privacy and security-awareness building. Persons of concern and local partners should be able to connect with relevant institutions to counteract criminal acts online.

Your mitigation strategy, designed with partners and PoCs, will be different in every context. Below are some activities that will help you prevent and mitigate risks:

1. **Identify, collaborate and partner with existing local networks, systems and organizations.** These people usually know the situation well and can support UNHCR and partners in understanding the overall environment. Often, campaigns and activities are already being organized to protect user rights online, and these can be supported by UNHCR specifically for refugees, the displaced and stateless.

2. **Work with PoCs to prevent unnecessary sharing of personal information.** Always make sure youhave an accessible and inclusive post pinned to the top of your Social Media account, or a banner, as the first thing visible when people open your page/account. This should

   a) alert people not to post their personal data or that of others on the platform;
   b) provide information on tools/channels that can be used for handling personal issues;
   c) explain the risks associated with using Social Media to share personal information. When people do share personal information on Social Media, always speak with them privately about why they shouldn't do it and offer alternative avenues for them to discuss personal matters;
   d) for people who share devices or access their accounts through public or borrowed devices, explain the need of signing out from accounts when they have finished. Point out the risks of sharing passwords, other log in details or personal information, or enabling others to access their accounts.

3. **Know your platforms.** UNHCR is not advised to collect and share the personal data of PoCs on Social Media. If their personal data is processed by UNHCR on Social Media, the operation's data controller is required to demonstrate full compliance with the data protection policy, including specifying the purpose for the data processing and ensuring there are legitimate grounds for it. Processing personal data should be minimized, based on the purpose and the risk. Adequate security measures should be in place, confidentiality should be respected and there should be measures to protect the data subject's rights. With regard to data privacy, each digital platform has it's strengths and weaknesses. When using a specific type of Social Media platform, you need to know the possible risks connected to it.

4. **Realize the threats that will always exist.** Some people want—and will do just about anything—to get others' private information. You have to realize that you can't keep everyone's privacy secure all the time. So you must weigh the expected benefits of engagement on Social Media against the identified risks. Design appropriate and feasible prevention and mitigation strategies and be ready to change course if the risks start to outweigh the benefits or the prevention measures are no longer effective or adequate. A 'best interest' approach should be taken when considering the advantages of using Social Media in certain emergencies i.e. to ensure the immediate safety and protection of individuals.

5. **Make sure all stakeholders understand the privacy settings and terms of reference of the platforms they use.** Many Social Media sites demand users agree to their terms of use when they open a new account. These agreements are often written in impenetrable legal jargon and not available in diverse languages. Often people do not know exactly what they are signing up for. Over time, these agreements often change or are updated. Make sure you know your Social Media platforms' terms of use, including data handling, sharing and disposal, and work with partners and Persons of Concern to identify and discuss possible risks.

6. **Invest in Digital and Data Literacy.** If Social Media plays a considerable part in your interactions with Persons of Concern and if they use Social Media consistently, you may want to invest in designing and implementing - or support partners and other stakeholders in implementing - digital and data literacy training and mentoring programs. You should also be working with early adopters in communities, who play important roles in building the digital literacy of their peers and - often - older people. These activities can also promote the inclusion of more groups in online conversations, groups that can be identified via UNHCR AGD analysis.

7. **Strengthen the ability of PoCs to access Social Media platforms safely.** UNHCR believes that PoCs and communities that host them have the right, and the choice, to be part of a connected society and to have independent access to technology that enables them to build better futures for themselves, their families and the world. While the realities of providing connectivity in displacement are diverse and contextual, if you are interested in working on connectivity, make sure you connect with the UNHCR Connectivity for Refugees team.

Resources

UNHCR's Connectivity for Refugees initiative creates safe spaces to experiment with connectivity solutions in the field. It works with UNHCR operations to develop local and context-specific, community-driven approaches to digital challenges. The UNHCR Innovation Service supports connectivity for efugees through a three-pillar approach that focuses on catalyzing connectivity innovations and solutions from the field; using research to have an all-round understanding of the intersections of connectivity and displacement; and capturing bright spots through storytelling and strategic communications.

8. **Monitor and detect emerging risks.** Monitor the risks of UNHCR engagement with PoCs via Social Media as one modality of the CBP program, looking at protection risks or violations of human rights like trafficking, surveillance, GBV, bullying and hate speech. Regularly monitoring Social Media behavior reveals links to the situation on the ground and can be used as an early warning system. The more UNHCR is able to involve PoCs themselves and partners in this activity, the better. Then monitoring is embedded in day-to-day Social Media interactions and becomes an ongoing collective effort.

4. Safeguarding

The use of Social Media for Protection by UNHCR staff presents a series of risks in itself, compounded by the fact that not all users have the same level of awareness of what behaviors are acceptable online.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) on Social Media

PSEA policies and practices[42] aim to end sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers, including UNHCR personnel, and ensure that allegations get a swift and appropriate response.

Four pillars of PSEA are stipulated in the [IASC Principals' Statement on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](), which agencies are expected to implement:

- **Manage and Coordinate:** Coordinate SEA prevention with partners and other actors, including governments, UN agencies and the private sector. Secure the commitment of senior managers to PSEA;
- **Engage with Communities and Secure their Support:** Raise PoC awareness of SEA and establish safe, confidential and culturally appropriate complaint mechanisms, designed in collaboration with them and representing different AGD groups;
- **Prevent:** Develop effective prevention mechanisms. Effective recruitment and performance management procedures are required, where the roles, responsibilities and expectations of all staff members are clearly explained. Reporting procedures for any SEA concerns should be easily accessible and staff should receive refresher orientation on them;
- **Respond:** Promote timely internal complaint and investigation procedures, led by the country's safeguarding focal point.

Resources

The [UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) (ST/SGB/2003/13)]() entered into force in the UN in 2003 and was formally adopted by UNHCR in a 2004 memorandum. On 10 May 2018, UNHCR released its [Strategy and Action Plan on Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment.]()

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42 See more on PSEA in [UNHCR Emergency Handbook, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), accessed May 2020]()

When it comes to PSEA, the risks associated with using Social Media are heightened by the fact that UNHCR staff and partners have their own personal accounts, which give them access to information about People of Concern (as much as they put online). In addition, there is the option to contact and connect with them privately.

Take these steps to address possible PSEA risks online:

Engage:

1. Raise PoCs' awareness of SEA by creating clear, multi-format content (in the right languages) that they can access online. They need to know that SEA can be as much of a problem online as offline;
2. Establish clear and confidential complaint and response mechanisms through preferred channels (or ensure a link to existing complaints mechanisms, such as call centers);
3. Tell community members how UNHCR will use Social Media to communicate with them and what they can expect in terms of response. For example, we may only discuss a certain service or we may only respond to comments during work hours). These 'rules of engagement' should be clearly visible on the platform.

Prevent:

1. Make sure you have a monitoring system for the private and group conversations carried out via UNHCR's Social Media account;[43]
2. Train staff on the appropriate behavior for Social Media, both in their professional and private lives, and develop relevant SOPs;
3. Train staff on the internal pathways for reporting any concerns or suspected cases of SEA to the appropriate focal point;
4. If you use bots or automated responses or IVRs, make sure the intro message contains information on PSEA risks and how to report;
5. Always have PSEA as part of your FAQ document, if you have one.

While UNHCR will always refrain from using Social Media to collect personal data and address sensitive protection issues, persons of concern often do share their personal information online, sometimes even showing pictures of themselves or their families. For this reason, make sure your staff and partners are trained on the Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR.
Refer to Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this Guide to learn more about how to engage with PoCs online and how to deal with personal sharing of information.

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43 One option may be to have at least one additional user with oversight on private conversations and within closed groups. This can also reassure community members and help protect staff from potential misunderstandings or being accused of inappropriate behavior.

Online Grooming

Online grooming is when someone uses the internet to trick, force or pressure a young person into doing something sexual - like sending a naked picture or video of themselves. Often, the groomer will build their trust before talking about doing anything sexual. Given the high visibility of UNHCR worldwide, and the widespread use of Social Media by children and teenagers,[44] all UNHCR staff managing and accessing Social Media must be informed about this practice and its relationship to SEA.

Regarding UNHCR, there are a number of Social Media grooming risks, from staff misrepresenting themselves to people acting under the guise of UNHCR. This is why it is essential that PoCs have access to clear and easily understandable information on the Code of Conduct for UNHCR staff.

Often working with local media helps spread information about what to expect from protection actors, both online and offline, and how to report inappropriate behavior.

> **!** **Important**
>
> The grooming of children for sexual purposes through Social Media is a growing problem. UNHCR staff accessing sensitive interfaces should be carefully vetted and clear safeguards should be established. Child safeguarding procedures for the offline world may need to be adapted online. Unfortunately online grooming often progresses rapidly, with offenders hiding behind the anonymity of the internet. The power dynamics of an offender using the 'legitimacy' of an UN-branded account should not be underestimated.

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44 Country operations should have a separate DPIA on engaging children through Social Media, also involving the Child Protection Unit. Specific SOPs should be developed.

📖 Resources

UNICEF, What Works to Prevent Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?, Review of national education strategies in East Asia and the Pacific, 2020

UNICEF, Guidance for Online Child Safeguarding for Service Providers, 2020

Plan International, Working Together with Children and Young People for Safety in the Cyber-World, 2014, Guide for Plan International program practitioners who work with children and young people in programs that access and utilize ICTs.

💬 Messaging Apps

The ICRC, together with The Engine Room and Block Party, has produced a report on the uses of Messaging Apps, such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Snapchat in humanitarian situations. The report looks at the potential of Messaging Apps to have a positive impact in crisis situations and discusses risks relating to security, data protection and privacy.

While the process of conducting a Risk Assessment for Messaging Apps is the same as explained above, several factors must be kept in mind when looking at the risks and challenges of using them for Protection. These are highlighted in the ICRC report, Chapter 4:
- Given the complexity of the systems of Messaging Apps, both new and largely untested, protection personnel should agree on codes of conduct, standards and/or ethical frameworks for their use;
- Most major Messaging App companies process and store data using proprietary systems that external organizations cannot scrutinize. If you need to address this issue, seek guidance from your regional bureau and HQ;
- Protection staff should do their best to ensure users of a UNHCR service delivered through a Messaging App are aware of and understand the App's terms of service;
- Verifying content is already an issue on Social Media. Using information from Messaging Apps can be even more challenging due to the speed at which information is sent, the volume of messages and the range of data. A Community-Based Approach to verification and content management helps mitigate this risk.

Resourcing

Understanding all the risks and vulnerabilities associated with using Social Media for CBP in a given country is a huge task and not necessarily one that UNHCR offices can investigate alone. Luckily, support is available from the regional bureaux and HQ divisions/services, and there are a number of organizations, in each country and worldwide, that work on issues from internet privacy and freedom to the protection of children on Social Media.

Of course, it is mandatory to comply with UNHCR policies, standards and guidance, such as the Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR. At a minimum, the risk analysis should take these into consideration.

These steps can help you maximize your resources to conduct a risk analysis of your Social Media activities:

- Try to include Social Media in your annual risk analysis, if one is done, so as to harness existing internal expertise and resources;
- Use the findings of your situation analysis to better understand the risks associated with Social Media use in the country;
- In places of high risk, consider connecting your Social Media strategy with a broader advocacy strategy, working with the government (as appropriate) and stakeholders to uphold human rights and protect PoCs online;
- Think about establishing partnerships and collaboration with local advocacy organizations already working on human rights violations online, or on the national regulatory framework for online rights violations;
- Look at existing UNHCR partners who may have the expertise or skills to address more nuanced risks, and work with them to address complex issues.

📖 **Resource**

Chapter 3 of the ICRC Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action focuses on the use of Social Media by humanitarian organizations to communicate and engage with communities. The Handbook also covers the use of Social Media to identify crises and improve the humanitarian response – see Chapter 6: Data Analytics and Big Data. For Messaging Apps, refer to Chapter 11: Mobile Messaging Apps.

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
DO ensure fair access to information about how to use Social Media safely and securely.	**DO NOT** overload PoCs with legal jargon. Rather, discuss with them clearly and simply the issues about their Social Media activities that may concern them directly.
DO engage community members to develop a better understanding of real and perceived risks on Social Media that can manifest online or offline.	**DO NOT** make perfect the enemy of the good. It is impossible to eliminate all risks but possible to manage risks sensibly, as far as resources allow. Make sure prevention and mitigation measures are in place and risk management is intelligently balanced in relation to the expected gains/benefits of using Social Media for Community-Based Protection.
DO seek support from UNHCR teams in understanding risk, whether related to digital access, digital engagement, data security and/or data protection.	**DO NOT** make assumptions about the risks communities face. Engage with them directly - especially the active Social Media users - to understand what risks are present and how they are managed (or not).
DO design interventions to prevent, manage, minimize or mitigate risks presented by engaging with communities through Social Media platforms.	**DO NOT** act recklessly with the data of persons of concern. UNHCR has strong policies to protect their data. Complying with the policy and following associated guidance can prevent misuse and abuse.
DO work with partners, including local authorities, ICT security services and Social Media companies, to highlight risks that need to be addressed.	**DO NOT** make a final decision about using Social Media without considering the potential benefits and risks of both engaging and not engaging.

Check List

Have you contacted the country operation's data controller to conduct a DPIA if required?

Have you shared the DPIA reports with regional and HQ DPO?

Have you contacted the regional bureau and HQ to help you conduct the risk assessment?

Have you identified and connected with in-country local actors working on online rights and SM security?

Have you conducted AGD-sensitive community consultations in readiness to discuss online risks and possible scenarios with key stakeholders?

Have you developed with all stakeholders a realistic and appropriate prevention and mitigation strategy? Have you identified ways to revise and update the strategy, and resource it?

Have you identified a process for gathering the needed consent for the use of Social Media data?

Have SOPs been developed for engaging with PoCs online, including monitoring and oversight?

Have staff and partners involved in the use of SM received basic orientation on data protection, PSEA, relevant standards and safeguarding?

Is there a system for monitoring and managing access to the data gathered and created through the SM platform?

Are SOPs in place for detecting, reporting and managing any personal data breach that would put PoCs at risk [DPP Section 4.4 and DPG Chapter 7 on Data Protection Breaches and relevant reporting procedures]?

Have you involved your data protection focal points to comply with the data protection policy, and the data controller for approval of using Social Media for specific purposes in the country operation?

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Case Studies

[Timo Luege, How Social Media is Changing Communication in Emergencies, November 2014](#)

[Anahi Ayala Iacucci, Crisis Mapping and Cybersecurity – Part II: Risk Assessment, 2011](#)

[OHCHR, The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age 2014](#)

[UN Chronicle, Government Policy for the Internet Must Be Rights-Based and User-Centred, by Wafa Ben-Hassine 2018](#)

[Nani Jansen Reventlow, Digital rights are *all* human rights, not just civil and political, 2019](#)

Chapter 3

How to Set Up Social Media Channels for Community-Based Protection

Introduction

This chapter looks at how to select the main components of a Social Media project and how to apply the insights of the Situation Analysis when using Social Media for Community-Based Protection. It takes you from choosing the right platform or tool to creating a draft Social Media Strategy for CBP.

If you think you may want to use Social Media for your CBP strategy/program, you must first conduct a Situation Analysis and a risk assessment before you make a final decision and start the project (see previous chapters). If you decide to go ahead, this chapter is about helping you decide about the different components of your Social Media strategy, and how you will use digital tools to implement it.

1. Platforms

There is no 'one size fits all' communications channel that will be liked and trusted by everyone. No society is homogeneous and we all have individual communication preferences. As with offline communication, so with online: The platform or app (or both) operations choose to implement a Social Media CBP program should be based on the findings of the situation analysis and the risk assessment.[45]

To select the Social Media tool to use, it is important to balance three different considerations:

1.   **Do No Harm:** UNHCR has a mandate and responsibility to provide international protection to Persons of Concern. In doing so, it is obliged to avoid harm and prevent and mitigate any negative impact it may have on affected populations, including through its digital engagement activities. Every platform has its own weaknesses, risks and possible protection concerns;

> **! Important**
>
> The "DO NO HARM" cannot be overstressed. For practical guidelines on how to identify, evaluate and prevent risks, see Chapter 2: Risk Assessment

2.   **Community Preferences:** An integral part of a Rights-and-Community-Based Approach is analyzing the different realities people face because of their diversity. Factors include age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation. Diversity is reflected on social media as much as it is offline.

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45   UNHCR Innovation, Communicating with Communities, or Individuals?, January 17, 2017

Too often, failure to consider the particular circumstances of a group has led unintentionally to further exclusion and discrimination. For example, literacy, technology skills and access to connectivity will decide who is excluded from the use of social media. In addition, government policies about access to the internet and mobile phones may sometimes prevent certain groups from accessing social media; [46]

UNHCR promotes gender equality and rights for all. You must analyze age, gender and diversity issues and incorporate them in all areas of your work. When the analysis reveals inequalities or exclusion, targeted actions must be taken to empower those who are being discriminated against to exercise their rights.[47] With Social Media this translates into the need to connect with offline protection work, as Social Media will necessarily exclude some groups of the population and the use of different channels poses different risks.

The choice of which platform to use will mostly be dictated by where the people you want to talk to are. Some may be on the move within or across countries. This is why you need to know which population group uses which tool (youth, older persons, women, people with disabilities, urban or rural dwellers, people in camps, PoCs, host communities etc.).

As with traditional communication channels, operations should leverage - as far as possible - Social Media platforms that community members already trust and like. This means virtually meeting community members where they are, rather than developing parallel channels.[48]

3. **Operational Management Considerations:** Different platforms used for different purposes will require you to use different resources and to set up different systems. Especially if you are planning to engage the PoCs and/or the host population at large, the purpose and way you use your Social Media presence will require you to invest in different types of resources, to set up systems that are tailored to the specific use and purpose, and to work with different actors.

    With so many channels now available, Social Media can be confusing and it can be difficult to decide which one is best suited to your goal. When you have identified the Social Media channel(s) used by persons of concern and discussed with them your protection aims, you can start thinking about the best approach to manage your activities and Social Media channels, always guided by the risk assessment.

✎ Tip

Make sure you know who is NOT on the platform and find alternative ways to include them.

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46 See more in UNHCR, Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2008
47 See more on this topic in UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity, Good Practices, UNHCR in Europe 2017 - 2018, July 2018
48 More information is available here.

You will also want to know the limitations of the technology you adopt and the implications this has for its operational management. Platforms like Facebook or Vkontakte, for example, are asynchronous, which means you do not necessarily need to manage information in real time (unless you use FB Messenger). Platforms like Twitter, on the other hand, are more immediate and people using them expect almost instant answers.[49] Make sure you know what input each platform will require for proper management. If you are working with partners and stakeholders, make sure you know their capacities and provide support accordingly.

Lastly, it is important to work on capacity building and strengthening with UNHCR staff, local partners and persons of concern. Avoid relying on one person's ability to manage SM platforms, especially if you work in an emergency setting, with a high turnover of staff. Make sure that as soon as you have consolidated a project with communities and partners, you create training materials and build the capacity of partners and POCs to co-manage it, as appropriate and feasible.

Pivotal in this process will be SOPs, agreements or MoUs that clarify who has access to what level of administration in each platform, both within UNHCR and externally with partners and stakeholders.[50]

Open or Closed Digital Systems?

Using Social Media, communities are able to share information either publicly or privately. An example of public information sharing is a Facebook page that can be accessed by anyone with a Facebook account. Private communities are closed groups that require access to be granted. These include Facebook groups or WhatsApp/Telegram/Signal groups.[51] This is an important distinction when operations assess how communities are using Social Media and what that implies for UNHCR's work with them. This is an important distinction when operations assess how communities are using Social Media and what that implies for UNHCR's work with them.

Some projects may be better run using a closed network, especially if they involve a specific group of the population that may be targeted or discriminated against.[52] Others will be more effective as open channels, for example if you want to set up a system to deliver up-to-date and verified information about refugee rights and asylum procedures. Often, for large-scale CBP projects, you will create integrated systems with both closed and open channels, each reaching different groups of the population.

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49 72% of people who use Twitter to lodge complaints expect a response within an hour, according to an October 2013 report by Lithium Technologies

50 See more about this topic in the UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015

51 Some of these apps allow you to choose if you want to create a private or public group, while security levels and data protection systems vary depending on the platform.

52 Find more information in Anahi Ayala, The Dichotomy of Technology in Conflict: Beauty and the Beast – in Vazquez Llorente R. and Wall, I. (eds.), 2014 Communications technology and humanitarian delivery: challenges and opportunities for security risk management, European Inter-agency Security Forum (EISF).

2. Content

When choosing content, marry the information you want to give with the interests of your audience. Developing quality content is essential if you want their attention.

It is important to distinguish between timeless content and topical or dynamic content. What channels work best for each and how do they inter-link?[53] For example, if asylum procedures rarely change, this can be considered "evergreen content". Everything produced about this issue today will still be relevant tomorrow. But if you are using social media to increase awareness of specific services, like clinics and/or vaccinations, then your content will need to be updated frequently and on time.

I. Choose your content

If you want people to read or view your Social Media content, you must produce timely material relevant to your target population. Remember that groups consume information differently, so your content strategy must be tailored to the ones you are addressing.

With content production, you will need to define and keep in mind the following variables:[54]

- **Language:** No matter what the content, language is the gate or barrier to information. Different groups may use different languages. It is important to provide content and engagement in the language people use, bearing in mind cultural sensitivities;

- **Clarity:** Avoid legal language and UNHCR jargon. Terms such as "repatriation", "complementary pathways", "third-country solution" and "irregular v regular" may not be obvious to everyone. Translate legal language into concrete examples and paraphrase when possible;

- **Format:** Avoid long written texts and go for engaging content e.g. videos, audio files, podcasts, radio dramas and infographics. YouTube channels are often a hit and allow for inclusivity;[55]

- **Connectivity:** While multimedia formats are good to communicate complex issues, especially to groups with different literacy levels, keep in mind the costs of using certain tools and accessing certain content. If possible, adapt content to different connectivity capacities. It is better to have some limited access to useful content than continuous access to content that you don't understand.

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53 Marrs, Megan What is Evergreen Content?. Wordstream, 2017-12-19, Retrieved 2019-07-05.

54 Internews, Humanitarian Information Services, Learning Collection, Humanitarian Radio Module Part III. How To Guide, 2017

55 Keep in mind that some tools require more resources than others to be managed properly.

> **! Important**
>
> Content can also carry risks when shared over social media, depending on the context. When in doubt, never post something you think might put people at risk:
> - If you find yourself in a situation where you need to handle and process the personal data of people of concern, including the need to share personal data with implementing partners and/or third parties, please refer to the UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2015 and the UNHCR, Guidance on Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern;
> - If you think your content may pose reputational risks for UNHCR or its partners discuss this with External Relations colleagues;
> - Always remember the "DO NO HARM" principle and the protection mandate of UNHCR. Content that may be helpful to some people may harm others, and vice-versa.

To help you vet content against protection risks, create internal content guidelines that staff can use to navigate sensitive questions, feedback, comments or discussions on Social Media. These guidelines should be developed with the relevant UNHCR units, experts and partners, and should reflect the overall approach all stakeholders take to discussing topics with Persons of Concern. The guidelines should also address possible UNHCR reputational risks associated with specific content.

Here are some examples of topics you may want to have in your content guidelines in a refugee situation:

- How to talk about criteria for resettlement to a third country;
- How to explain policies that regulate "preferred asylum" in certain countries, as well as information on levels of recognition of asylum status;
- How to provide information for people on the move (clearly valid, in order to highlight risks and services), as opposed to information that could be perceived as encouraging onward movement;
- How to manage open discussions about gender-related issues or GBV on public forums;
- How to provide verified and reliable information about services and locations that warrant certain levels of discretion (e.g. safe-houses).

As explained above, avoid giving standard answers. These are complex issues and staff should find the right words, tailoring content, format, language and tone.

> **📖 Resources**
>
> To learn more about how to design guidelines to respond to feedback, and how to manage sensitive conversations, see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this Guide.

II. Content Production

Regardless of your subject matter, you should always produce "quality" content, i.e., content that is:

- Accurate;
- Relevant;[56]
- Engaging;
- Timely.

To create such content, invite people to participate. For example, you could film mini-dramas produced by refugee youth. You could ask people to participate in an online competition to create the best mobile videos for Tik-Tok. Or you could organize photo camps to be shared on Instagram. The best content is often created by communities themselves.

Remember that UNHCR has strong skills and capacities internally that you can rely on when it comes to content production, such as:

- External Relations/Public Information colleagues at operational/regional level;
- Global Communications Service, including the Global Social Media Team;
- Digital Engagement Service;
- UNHCR's Innovation Service.

> **! Important**
>
> CBP Social Media is not a good place for press releases or official communications, which should go on the UNHCR institutional social media accounts. CBP projects need to be implemented using an AGD lens, with disaggregated mapping of the population and content tailored to their needs. Always discuss your content with PoCs and partners, who can point out the practical uses and confirm if it is in line with your protection goals.

III. Content Engagement

Community mobilization and engagement are key components of the Community-Based Approach. The aim is to help communities know and enjoy their rights.

We work with them to strengthen their capacity to:

- Address protection risks;
- Identify short and long-term solutions;
- Agree on priorities;
- Develop and implement action plans that respect individual rights;
- and monitor and evaluate results.

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56 Also culturally sensitive, appropriate and empowering

Communities will mobilize themselves when there is trust and confidence and they see benefits emerging from the process.[57]

On Social Media people expect this level of engagement, often in real time. Regardless of the platform you have chosen, you will have to set up systems to provide a quality response as quickly as possible. This may include explaining why UNHCR cannot help or may not have the answer yet.

✎ Tip

A regularly updated FAQ can help you deal with a sudden increase in questions and comments and support you in managing your engagement with communities more efficiently. See Chapter 4 for how to create and maintain a FAQ.

Make sure that if you provide information to people, they always have the means to respond, ask questions and engage with your content. Social Media assume there will be a dialogue, so every time you publish something, be ready to manage the response your content will produce.

To increase your engagement, you can put questions to your audience using, for example, Facebook polls, tweetathons or similar events that show people you value their input. Share the results with them directly.

As explained above, digital media allow for both synchronous (people exchanging information in real time) and asynchronous (people sharing information when it suits them) communication and interactions. So your content production schedule and engagement must be designed and organized accordingly.

📖 Resource

CDAC Network, 101 Seminar Report: Social Media in Emergencies, Dec 2013

In 2013, the CDAC Network hosted a 101 Seminar on Social Media for emergencies. This report, which summarizes the seminar, is divided into two sections. The first explains why Social Media is useful in emergencies. The second offers case studies and simulations to illustrate the challenges of using Social Media in emergencies.

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57   See more in UNHCR, UNHCR Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations Manual, 2018

3. Roles and Modalities

As with other communications channels, Social Media offer different modalities that UNHCR may adopt to strengthen it's community engagement and Community-Based Protection. The four modalities are described below, along with some considerations to help you understand how to approach them.

Modality type	Features	Considerations
Interagency Communication is established and information is shared at an inter-agency level. This can strengthen inter-agency reporting and follow-up, and also the consistency of information being shared. UNHCR can play a leadership or collaboration role.	Either public or private features can be supported. Specific features of this modality may include: no individual agency branding; common inter-agency branding.[58]	All agencies' roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined; this includes follow-up and response accountabilities (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). Coordination will require resourcing. Consider how information will flow; what inter-agency sign-off procedures are required etc. (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). The required resources will need to be defined (depending on the role UNHCR plays). Consider if you need to have a dedicated role as focal point, and if this is incorporated into an individual's or team's scope of work.
Direct Implementation UNHCR establishes its own Social Media communication channel(s) with appropriate resourcing. This enables a considerable level of control concerning information UNHCR chooses to share via the platforms. UNHCR can invite partners to join the channels but maintains a leadership role.[59]	Either public or private can be supported. Specific features of this modality may include: UNHCR branding, linkages with UNHCR's offline communication channels (Protection Information Points, Community Dialogues).	Roles and responsibilities will need to be established and this includes follow-up to feedback and complaints across multi-functional teams. This should also include procedures for referring inter-agency complaints received through UNHCR-run Social Media channels. (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). The required resources will need to be defined. Consider if it is necessary to have a dedicated role as focal point and/or if this is incorporated into an individual's or team's scope of work etc.

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58 An example of this modality (led by UNHCR) is El Jaguar (Facebook).

59 Any UNHCR-owned or branded Social Media platform, excluding websites and Social Media accounts, can only be created with permission from the Global Communication Service. The request form is available here.

Modality type	Features	Considerations
Through a Partner UNHCR's partner (NGO, CBO) establishes its own Social Media communication channel(s) with appropriate resourcing. UNHCR is able to leverage these channels by directly engaging or engaging via a partner.	Either public or private can be supported. Specific features of this modality may include: Partner branding, linkages with partner's offline communication channels (Protection Information Points, Community Dialogues).	If engaging in a private channel via a partner, UNHCR may not have direct access to information being shared. Clear information flow, roles and responsibilities will need to be established to ensure that UNHCR is able to access relevant information, including feedback and complaints (i.e. through reporting). (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). If engaging directly (either privately or publicly), UNHCR needs to establish roles and responsibilities with the partner. Considerations should include: when and how UNHCR intervenes (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). UNHCR should avoid over reliance on these Social Media channels without ensuring a contribution to resourcing. If the partner is unable to maintain resourcing, UNHCR risks losing an established feedback channel.
Community-Lead Approach The communities (individuals/groups) establish their own Social Media communication channel(s). UNHCR is able to leverage these channels by directly engaging, or engaging via a community member/group.	Either public or private can be supported. Specific features of this modality may include: no group/ agency branding, strong community ownership, multiple interconnected groups/individuals (i.e. no one dedicated 'platform' or page)	If engaging in a private channel via a community member or group, UNHCR may not have direct access to information being shared. Clear information flow, roles and responsibilities must be established to ensure UNHCR is able to access relevant information, including feedback and complaints (i.e. through consultation and/or reporting). (Recommendation: SOPs to be created). If engaging directly (either privately or publicly) UNHCR needs to understand its role as a 'community member' and contributor. The rules of engagement are established by the online community, and agreed with UNHCR.

Regardless of the modality, remember that the more you can create streamlined internal and external coordination mechanisms, the better.

Consider how centralized your system will be. The example below shows a WhatsApp centralized messaging system.

Example of a WhatsApp tree management structure

A "WhatsApp tree" aims to cascade information from a centralized point (one) to several groupss (many) to dispersed users (even more)
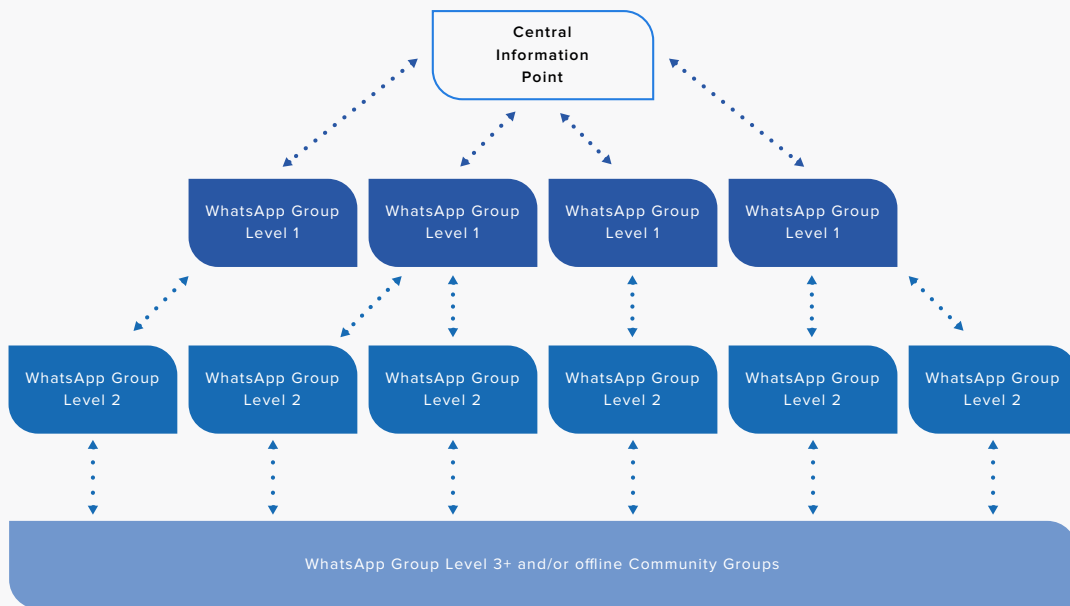
© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

4. Building a CBP Social Media Strategy

> ### 📖 Resource
>
> Your project will require the creation of a multi-functional team. In addition to the technical skills needed to use Social Media, make sure you have the knowledge and skills listed in Chapter 4 of this manual:
> UNHCR, A Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations

"Participation" means the full and equal involvement of all members of a community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives, both in public and private spheres, including online. The level of participation depends on how rewarding people find the experience and whether they gain something from it. Participation also requires that instead of informing and deciding for people, we listen to them.[60] In this regard, UNHCR's role on Social Media is to facilitate discussions and analysis with all Persons of Concern so they can make their own choices.

One of the best ways to realize the benefits of digital-first community participation is to use continuous engagement activities. This means thinking beyond the transactional mindset of project-based consultations and instead adopting strategies to drive ongoing conversations.

If UNHCR is directly implementing a project using Social Media, then creating a SM strategy is the first step to understanding if you have all of the resources you need, if your activities align with your objectives and how to measure progress.

Often, if a CBP approach has been followed, it is possible to implement activities mostly relying on local partners and PoCs themselves, with UNHCR providing technical backup. Having communities and stakeholders involved at the Situation Analysis stage can also promote longer-term sustainability that translates into community ownership.

Think about a Social Media strategy as a living document, because it should be customized and edited over time, as the relationship with the audience changes and the operational context evolves.

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60 See more in UNHCR, Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations, 2008

The image below[61] is a clear visualization of the components of a Social Media strategy. You will find slightly different frameworks depending where you look but they all have more or less the same elements.

Components of a Social Media Strategy

- USE social media yourself
- STUDY relevant case studies
- EDUCATE senior executives
- HEAR from practitioners
- EXPLORE the latest trends

- IDENTIFY relevant social media monitoring tools
- LEARN how you can best use tools
- DISCOVER what's said about you and your market
- FIND relevant communities and conversations
- UNCOVER key influencers

- IMPROVE customer engagement
- ENHANCE brand and reputation management
- ACCELERATE customer-driven innovation
- ATTRACT talented employees
- INCREASE sales

- IDENTIFY opportunities
- UNDERSTAND risks
- CLARIFY risk of NOT engaging
- SET clear social media policies
- COMMUNICATE policies internally

- ENTER the converstion
- PROVIDE relevant content
- ADD value to communicaties
- ENGAGE with influencers
- RESPOND positively

- DEFINE first subsequent phases
- TARGET initial platforms
- IDENTIFY resources required
- ESTABLISH responsibilities and time commitment
- LINK to offline marketing activities

- SET relevant measures of success
- MONITOR measures
- CAPTURE and communicate success stories
- REPORT to senior executives
- REFINE your strategy and measures

- IDENTIFY internal 'champions' for social media
- TRAIN and support champions and staff
- KEEP abreast of developments
- ESTABLISH a pilot program
- DEVELOP a culture of responsibile transparency

Listen · Learn · Prioritize Objectives · Establish Governance · Define Activities · Develop Capabilities · Measure and Refine · Engage in Conversations

ENGAGEMENT · STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

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61   Advanced Human Technology, Social Media Strategy Framework, 2009

A Social Media strategy should have at least the following information:

1. **Objectives** of the project, including specific objectives of the Social Media component;
2. **Governance structure** of the Social Media accounts and policies/SOPs related to them. Specifically, these should include safeguarding measures and how to manage any SEA reports (see Chapter 2);
3. **Specific activities** of Social Media CBP initiative, and how they link to UNHCR work offline;
4. **Capacities and skills**. Which are available and which are lacking, both internally and among stakeholders? Think about how to enhance them;
5. **Measurable indicators** and benchmarks to evaluate the project over time and real-time;

📖 **Resource**

See Chapter 11 for more information on how to link offline and online activities.

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6. **Engagement measures** and strategy to improve engagement over time, detailing ideas for specifically engaging different age, gender, ability and other diversity groups;
7. **Mapping of the community/ies engaged**, their roles and responsibilities for participatory strategies, and engagement in monitoring systems;
8. **Identified risks and prevention and mitigation** measures related to content.[62]

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62 See more on Chapter 2: Risk Assessment

5. Trust

Social Media is more than just a platform to promote services and content. It's a two-way street for communication that can engage PoCs, stakeholders and partners. These interactions help build trust and form a community around Social Media. UNHCR recognizes the power relationship between humanitarian actors, including government partners, and the community who rely on them to ensure appropriate use of resources.[63]

We are responsible for creating a climate of trust through our behavior and our attitudes. UNHCR's, Code of Conduct provides clear guidance in this respect, and Section 4 of the UNHCR, Community-Based Approach manual details the knowledge, skills and attitudes that should be encouraged to facilitate partnerships.

You need trust to create a deeper relationship and to encourage repeat interactions and communication.

A well known Social Media trust formula describes trust in this way:[64]

$$\text{TRUST} = \frac{\text{AUTHORITY} \times \text{HELPFULNESS} \times \text{INTIMACY}}{\text{SELF PROMOTION}}$$

Authority: People may or may not trust UNHCR when discussing issues related to forced displacement and statelessness. The quality of the content you produce and share, as well as the advice you give when joining conversations, shapes your authority. To build and maintain it, you need to be able to answer questions and take part in the conversation. Often it is easier to work by proxy, i.e. to engage already trusted sources (like a community Facebook group or specific influencers) and support them, rather than try to build trust from scratch. This may be especially valid if you think your reputation in the country may be damaged;

Helpfulness: People have endless choices on Social Media, and they are more likely to engage with those channels that are helpful than those that are not. Comment and answer questions. Be willing to explain yourself and your actions. And share useful content from a wide array of sources, not just from UNHCR and its partners;

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63 UNHCR, Handbook on Self-Reliance, 2005
64 Chris Brogan**, Trust Agents: Using the Web to Build Influence, Improve Reputation and Earn Trust, Paperback, 2010**

Intimacy: Intimacy involves showing your human side. People trust those they know, so it's important to show there are humans behind UNHCR's digital presence. It's not the "organization" that's tweeting or posting on Facebook but real people. Use colloquial language when talking to others on Social Media and add context to personalize. Make your posts relevant to your online networks and communities;[65]

Self-promotion: Each time you post an article or a link that promotes UNHCR or its products, services and articles, you're being self-promotional. This is often the goal of public information or external relations offices. But if everything you're sharing on Social Media is about your achievements, followers will trust you less. We are not talking about the UNHCR corporate digital presence. We are talking about a community-based protection tool for engagement and participation, so as much as possible, self-promotion should be off the table.

When it comes to trust, keep in mind:

- **Involve your audience:** People more easily trust those in a similar situation to themselves. They share the same experience and aspirations;
- **Support and use existing trusted sources:** These can be Facebook pages or groups, government sites or digital tools. It is much easier to build trust by proxy than doing it from scratch. Eventually you can work with your partners/influencers to share and recommend a UNHCR or partner-led account;
- **Identify influencers who can help you build trust:** If you are addressing youth, for example, see if there are any YouTubers or other Social Media influencers who you can bring into the conversation. You do not need to reach everyone on SM, but if you target the right people you can reach a considerable part of the population. Remember this is not a PR project, so you are not engaging influencers to support UNHCR per se, but to achieve a protection outcome;

Factsheet

See Factsheet 8 to learn more about influencers

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65 While this Guide does not tell you how to use your personal Social Media account, the UNHCR, Guidelines on the Personal Use of Social Media, 2019 provides good advice on online behavior, regardless of who owns the account.

- **Trust is a two-way street:** To be trusted as a source, you must show that you trust your communities. This only happens if you create an open dialogue and are as transparent and honest as possible about what you can and cannot do;
- **Value criticism, negative comments or low engagement:** These are signs of eroding trust, so make sure you investigate such situations when they arise. Engage with critics in a constructive way;
- **Trust is not giving "the answer people want", but giving "an answer":** Do not be afraid to say that you do not know something, or that UNHCR does not have the means to do something. People are more understanding than you think, especially if they feel you have been honest with them. While it is natural to want to please or refrain from saying anything "disappointing" or "unpleasant", trust is related to our ability to show our "weaknesses". If you don't immediately know the answer, returning with a response after some time also builds trust;
- **Find champions:** UNHCR and partners can find champions in the local population to help build trust for their online presence. For example, use pages that PoCs already frequent, and support the admins of these pages, rather than building a new channel. Connecting your online and offline activities is crucial and your trusted sources/influencers' network should stretch from online to offline.

! Important

In CBP projects in the field, we should respect community leadership structures, while ensuring they are inclusive and representative.

In this regard Social Media differs in two ways from offline activities:
- It allows UNHCR to establish direct contacts with PoCs individually or as groups, based on spontaneous systems of representation, often chosen by PoCs themselves;
- It may reveal very different power structures from the offline community, and will always exclude certain categories of people.

When implementing CBP Social Media activities, ensure your interventions do not undermine the existing online community's support for those structures. Identify and involve people who are marginalized. Try to identify networks rather than leadership structures (for example, support groups for people with disabilities, Mums' support groups or groups used by youth to exchange information on the country of origin.) Use participatory methods to ensure all community members are aware of and have the chance to take part in reaching decisions.[66]

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66 UNHCR, Manual on a Community-Based Approach in UNHCR Operations, 2008

Messaging Apps

Setting up protection activities with a Messaging App requires you to take the steps above, with the caveat that you will have to invest more into your outreach and advocacy to let people know where you are.

Often there is a lack of reliable data on Messaging Apps used, by whom and how. So deciding whether to use an App and if so, which one and how, is often the result of consultations with communities, surveys and information needs assessments.

The following factors should be considered:

- **UNHCR has a responsibility to protect personal data** it has access to when using messaging apps to engage with communities;
- **Management and response:** Messaging Apps process large quantities of data in real time, and when UNHCR is using third-party tools to support engagement through messaging apps at scale, this processing is sometimes undertaken by UNHCR. Proper planning will help you avoid being overwhelmed and cut risks associated with users' privacy;
- **Two-way communication:** Using two-way, real-time Messaging Apps as a one-way system will frustrate communities who find their questions are not being acknowledged or addressed. Do not use Messaging Apps for one-way mass communication but allow users to respond, interact and ask questions;
- **Resources:** Time and resources are needed for checking and validating information received through Messaging Apps. Consider the resources needed for effective data management and analysis, and prompt response and action;
- **Partnerships:** Consider collaborating directly with Messaging App companies or companies that have relations with them. Research and pilot projects show the potential Messaging Apps have to support humanitarian initiatives.
- **Community Ownership:** Given the complexity of managing Messaging Apps, the resources needed and the role trust plays, often it is more efficient to support local networks or partners in using them responsibly than having UNHCR manage them directly.

Resource

ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party, Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps, January 2017

The ICRC, together with The Engine Room and Block Party, has produced this report on the current and potential uses of Messaging Apps such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and Snapchat in humanitarian situations. Messaging Apps have great potential to make a positive impact in crises. They also bring risks related to security, data protection and privacy.

Resourcing

Various resourcing considerations need to be taken into account when planning to engage with communities using Social Media. They depend on your chosen modality and operational complexity.

✎ Tip

Don't attempt to use all Social Media channels at once. In consultation with your community, identify one or two priority channels.

The following recommendations will help you think through resource requirements:

1. **Think incremental**
    Plan to start small and see how you can grow incrementally over time. You do not have to use all the available digital tools at once. When choosing a platform used by persons of concern, pick the one that is most appropriate and feasible in your context. It should be;
    • easy to use;
    • fit your budget;
    • offer data protection by design;
    • and ideally be open source[67] where you do not have to build too much capacity at the outset.

    That then allows you to experiment with content formats. Once you have tested your workflows and systems, you can think about expanding to include other platforms/channels, based on the needs, capacities and preferences of PoCs and other targeted audiences. Keep in mind the protection risks, including as they relate to data protection and privacy;

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67 Open-source software is a type of computer software for which source code is released under a license. The copyright holder grants users the rights to use, study, alter and distribute the software to anyone, for any purpose. Open-source software can be and often is developed in a collaborative public manner

2.   **Plan for two-way communication**
     We can only really listen and talk to communities if we establish a conversation. You can post an announcement on Facebook or put out information on a WhatsApp Tree but this is not two-way communication or engagement. And it does not help UNHCR meet the AAP commitments outlined in the AGD policy. Your resourcing plans must ensure you can detect and respond to incoming questions, comments and concerns promptly. Consider who will be responsible for monitoring the channel. Will it be a dedicated focal point or part of an individual's or team's role?

3.   **Integrate your Social Media channel into referral pathways[68]**
     As with traditional offline communication, complaints and feedback shared via Social Media need to be properly referred, responded to and documented. Working out this process is essential to help you determine roles, responsibilities, timelines and resources. This includes mapping and responsibility-setting at an inter-agency level. Coordinating across multiple communication channels can be a full time role. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should outline how information will flow, when and how, as well as who will respond and follow-up;[69]

4.   **Keep up to speed and be present**
     Conversations on Social Media develop quickly. When considering resourcing, work out how you will keep maximum time limits for replies (recommendation: under 24 hours). Allow time for additional research, reflection and AGD-sensitive consultations to ensure the response is accurate and meets standards of quality. Some comments might not need an extensive reply. A simple 'thank you' or liking a comment can show 'presence'. However, the channels will need to be routinely monitored by an individual/team;

> "When choosing a platform used by people of concern, pick the one that is most appropriate. It should be easy to use, fit your budget, **have the most appropriate** privacy/data protection design **and be scalable so that you can build capacity over time**".

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68 See Chapter 7 for more information on this subject.

69 The integration of Social Media into other channels of communication is especially important to ensure that 'tickets' or requests are logged and not duplicated. Often, PoCs will get in touch via different channels, with the same query.

5.   **Translate key information**

Either on the same channel, or across multiple Social Media channels, you may find the community uses different languages e.g. when sharing external links. You will need continuous access to translation resources so that key information is always translated and made accessible to the community and colleagues. Depending on your situation, translation may be done 'in-house' through available colleagues, partners and/or volunteers (as per pre-agreed roles), or you may need to consider an external service;

6.   **Resource the online/offline interface**

Not every person of concern has access to connectivity to engage in conversations via Social Media. Consider how resources can help bridge this digital divide to improve accessibility. There are many solutions and the cost will vary. Options may include targeting smart phone distributions to extend WhatsApp networks, expanding mobile network data coverage or providing community access points;[70]

7.   **Generate quality content**

Social Media enable conversations across a range of formats: audio, video, image, text, icons and emojis. Who generates this content, and how? The simple addition of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on your Social Media homepage will throw light on content from your program and partners. To keep the conversation engaging consider how you will resource video, audio and photos. Content can be generated in-house or externally, depending on your budget. Consider how persons of concern from different age, gender and vulnerability groups could help you generate or develop content, such as short videos. Remember it should be relevant, relatable and put in context;

8.   **Advertise your Social Media presence**

To engage more community members and encourage people to join your group and share content, you can advertise your page or group (see Chapter 8 to learn more about how to use ads). This can be relatively cheap to do - for example using stickers/posters in public places - or more resource-intensive. By paying to promote your account online, you can gain attention and build your community. Pricing for targeted Social Media adverts varies between countries and languages;[71]

9.   **Take time to establish trust and build communities**

Engagement via Social Media is not a 'quick fix' strategy and should not be planned as a short-term exercise. Make sure you have the resources to sustain the strategy/program beyond the initial set-up. Consider how account administration and other responsibilities will be handed over as colleagues leave or rotate. Formal, written SOPs are important to ensuring that the SM project is predictable, transparent, and can be handed over.

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70   See more on how UNHCR is trying to address connectivity issues on the Connectivity for Refugees page.

71   See Chapter 10: Ads, Outreach and Advocacy for more information on how to use SM ads.

✓ Do's

DO consult your community to ascertain if it is appropriate for UNHCR or partners to join private pages/channels. Be sure to consult different groups, particularly people with specific needs.

DO take time to identify who is trusted on specific Social Media, and why. Then you can rely on existing resources;

DO consider linking your Social Media project with existing static information systems, such as help. unhcr.org or the UNHCR country website, as well as service referral mappings;

DO choose platforms and systems that you have the capacity and resources to manage over time;

DO opt for locally used platforms as much as possible, even if they do not reach outside the country;

DO make sure you have systems to evaluate and adjust your Social Media strategy continuously;

✕ Don'ts

DO NOT join an established closed/private conversation under a guise/pseudonym to gain access. Often, communities have various ways to verify your identity. Being discovered will erode trust.

DO NOT try to duplicate or re-create something that already exists.

DO NOT use different Social Media platforms as if they were the same. Don't repost the same content, with the same format, on all of them. Target your audience.

DO NOT choose a system or platform that suits you without checking that the people you want to engage with are using it (see Chapter 1);

DO NOT create new systems or platforms unless they are designed with the communities themselves;

DO NOT use mechanisms that adopt systematic questioning methods. These may in fact cause disenfranchisement through the failure to generate live feedback.

Check List

Have you held discussions with stakeholders and established what platform is best, given the population you want to reach? ☐

Have you done your population mapping and figured out which groups of the population use which tools, how and what for? (see Chapter 1) ☐

Have you discussed with PoCs and stakeholders the strategy you will use? For which group will you use it, and on which channel? What are the associated risks? ☐

Have you decided the content you want to share on Social Media? Who will design and produce it, and how? ☐

Did you decide what operational management system you need for your SM platform, and the specific role each unit/partner/stakeholder will play? ☐

Do you (or your partners) have the resources to create engaging content and respond to feedback and questions in a timely manner? ☐

Have you worked out your preliminary Social Media Strategy and indicators that you can measure over time? ☐

Have you considered the needs and vulnerabilities of specific groups (e.g., LGBTQI people, older persons and persons with disabilities)? ☐

Have you identified Social Media trusted sources, influencers, micro-influencers and other stakeholders who can help you build trust? ☐

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Case Studies

UNHCR Innovation, Communicating with Communities, or Individuals?, 2017

Social Media and Forced Displacement: Big Data Analytics & Machine-Learning", White Paper, 2017

US Department of Homeland Security, Innovative Uses of Social Media in Emergency Management, 2013

Lovari, Alessandro & Bowen, Shannon, Social media in disaster communication: A case study of strategies, barriers, and ethical implications, Journal of Public Affairs., 2019

The Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC, Social Networking, Social Media and Complex Emergencies, 2018

© UNHCR/Lilly Carlisle

Chapter 4

Community Engagement

Introduction

This chapter talks about how to use Social Media to engage communities in conversation. It gives an overview of the different ways Social Media can be used for Community-Based Protection and to build trust between UNHCR and the people we serve.

📖 Resources

ICRC, A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), 2016

Humanitarian professionals often speak of Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA). Accountability in programming and operations puts communities at the heart of the response; communication and participation are integrated throughout the program cycle or operation. IFRC has developed a CEA toolkit to help protection personnel assess, design, implement, monitor and evaluate community engagement and accountability in support of programs and operations. The toolkit is used in conjunction with the IFRC CEA Guide.

UNHCR always takes a community-based approach with the people it serves. Through consultation and participation, communities engage meaningfully in the programs that affect them, and play a leading role in change. UNHCR recognizes that, without the engagement of persons of concern, external intervention cannot achieve sustained improvement for them. CBP is more than a matter of consulting communities, or their participation in information gathering. It is a systematic and continuous process of engaging them as analysts, evaluators and implementers of their own protection. Social Media is one of the many tools that UNHCR can use to achieve this outcome.[72]

As engagement is essential to any CBP project, so it is for Social Media. Engagement on Social Media can be achieved as a specific set of UNHCR-managed activities or be implemented by partners, in collaboration with PoCs or in any other collaborative way. Meaningful and consistent engagement can only be done in the preferred language of the people we interact with. This is why admin and moderators of engagement with community platforms should always be national staff, oersons of concern or local partners.[73]

Community engagement is a critical part of what UNHCR does. It is based on the simple premise that communities should be listened to and have a meaningful role in processes and issues that affect them.

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72 UNHCR, A Community Based Approach to UNHCR Operations, 2008
73 UNHCR, A Community Based Approach to UNHCR Operations, 2008

Around the world and across countries, community engagement supports people in acting themselves to address their most pressing problems.[74]

In this chapter we look at different ways to build and maintain engagement, and in particular at how to manage two-way communication systems to engage and increase participation.

Resources

See Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 for more information on ways to engage with PoCs on Social Media.

As explained in Chapter 3, we define participation on Social Media as the involvement of members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives. This means our ability to engage PoCs online is directly linked to our efforts to make sure the experience is rewarding and they gain something useful and meaningful from it.

Techniques for driving continuous engagement on Social Media include:

Live Q&A sessions that can be done as videos, audio, tweets or polls on Facebook, for example;

Simple, fun competitions, like the "Bucket Challenge", created to raise awareness on whatever subject;

Forums where your community can talk about the things that interest or concern them. These can be closed groups or sections of your digital channels where you allow people free discussion;

Advocacy campaigns using influencers or popular celebrities (making sure they come from different backgrounds);

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74 UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Age Gender and Diversity, 2018

Dedicated content, made with influencers, that PoCs can discuss and comment on;

PoC-created material, for example video stories filmed with their mobile cameras. These make a good starting point for conversations on the issues that have arisen

By using some of these continuous engagement techniques, you can maintain regular contact with the community. They take control of issues that are important to them while you get a better sense of problems and opportunities ahead of time.

Resources

UNICEF, Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement, 2019

UNICEF Communication for Development (C4D) developed the Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement. It is a guide to help stakeholders establish an enabling environment in which community engagement is intentional, structured and at the core of sustainable development. The aim is to establish a common language among stakeholders for defining community engagement principles, key actions, goals and benchmarks. Guidance is given for gender-sensitive approaches in high, middle and low-income countries, and in development and humanitarian contexts across all sectors.

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1. Social Media Community Management

Respectful and effective communication with communities is central to all UNHCR work. UNHCR, partners and people of concern regularly communicate in formal and informal daily encounters, interviews and participatory assessments, including online interactions.[75]

Even though they may not focus on a specific issue or a personal case, these interactions are critical to understanding the broader protection environment and PoCs' needs and capacities.

> ! **Important**
>
> One subset of communication with communities and engagement activities is Risk Communication. This refers to the exchange of real-time information, advice and opinions between experts and people facing threats to their health and economic or social well-being. The purpose of risk communication is to enable people at risk to take informed decisions to protect themselves and their loved ones. UNHCR Risk Communication preparedness and response should always be conducted in a participatory way, informed by community feedback and optimized to detect and respond to concerns, rumors and misinformation. Empathetic and consistent messaging in local languages, through trusted channels and building on the capacity of local entities, is essential to establishing authority and trust.
>
> As an example, see Risk Communication and Engagement Guidance on UNHCR's COVID19 response.

People sometimes have the impression that the internet guarantees them anonymity, making them less afraid of the consequences of what they say or do online. With training and guidance from the authorized account manager, you should use your UNHCR accounts to respond to comments on Social Media and engage people in conversation.

This area of work - called 'Community Management' - can help de-escalate crisis situations. It can correct misinformation or disinformation and diffuse tension; provide a space where the consequences of online actions are personalized and discussed; encourage positive interaction; and set the tone of the conversation.[76]

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75 UNHCR Innovation, Communicating with Communities, accesses June 2020

76 The UNHCR Global Social Media Team has a dedicated person, as well as training and guidelines that you can access.

A meaningful and consistent community management strategy requires resources, time and expertise. Community management also comes with risks. They may be operational and reputational risks for UNHCR or risks for persons of concern, who can disclose too much information on Social Media or not be aware of the visibility of their conversations or opinions.[77]

While UNHCR and protection partners do not have the capacity to engage with everyone on Social Media, they have a duty to respond to people who contact them directly, either publicly or in private, and on Social Media managed by UNHCR or protection partners. They also have an obligation to guarantee the safety of the people they engage with.

> ! **Important**
>
> Any form of meaningful engagement requires a Community-Based Approach and this is true for Social Media as much as for offline activities. Bear in mind the more people or groups you engage on Social Media, the more capacity you will need. Social Media engagement requires at least the same resources as offline engagement. If you implement an effective protection strategy on Social Media, over time you may not have to invest so many resources on engagement overall. Offline and online, your protection strategies will align and support each other.

Communication on Social Media can be negatively affected by various factors. Unfortunately, when PoCs and staff are under pressure, it is not always easy to remain friendly, patient and attentive. Emotions such as anger, anxiety or fatigue can influence the way persons of concern express themselves. Distressed people often have trouble recounting their experiences or explaining themselves in writing. Similarly, stress and pressure may decrease staff members' ability to read the situation, interact as necessary, and act respectfully. There may also be pre-existing prejudices. If not handled properly, these conditions can interfere with our work to ensure online protection of persons of concern. And, the power imbalance between PoCs and staff can limit the openness of communication, create unrealistic expectations, and heighten tensions.[78]

UNHCR protection staff using Social Media, including community managers, must adhere to professional standards. The tone should be respectful, inclusive, cordial and neutral; language and vocabulary should match what is expected of UN civil servants. Be accessible and friendly, and treat our communities of concern with dignity. Remember we are having a conversation, so invest in community management skills, train often and avoid relying on pre-written scripts.[79]

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77 See more on Risks in Chapter 2 of this Guide

78 UNHCR, Community-Based Protection in Action - Effective & Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement, 2016

79 Often organizations provide standard written answers that Community Managers can use. But it is better to train staff to understand PoCs' (and their own) biases and challenges and work with them. Standard answers are more appropriate for Corporate or Institutional accounts.

2. Responding to Positive Feedback

Resources

The guidelines below do not apply to UNHCR Institutional Social Media accounts,[80] which are always created by external relations. Instiutional accounts are not a CBP tool for engagement but rather a corporate tool for UNHCR as an organization and brand.

For more on UNHCR Community Management and Social Media guidelines for official UNHCR corporate accounts, read:
- UNHCR Community Management Guidelines;
- UNHCR Global Social Media Team - The Ultimate Social Media Guide;
- UNHCR Trolling Guidelines.

In this chapter, we use the word 'comments' for everything ranging from comments to feedback, reviews, tweets or messages posted on a Social Media account.

A comment on Social Media means a lot to UNHCR and should be acknowledged and answered. We encourage positive and constructive views, comments and feedback about how we are making a difference for persons of concern. Always reply to such messages, acknowledging the time and effort that people have put in to commenting.

Step 1: Address the person directly

Community members want to know they have been heard. Use a conversational tone in keeping with the Social Media platform. Use clear language and be respectful, direct and personal. For example: 'Hi [name], thank you for your comment/response/feedback...' This way the person feels he or she has been taken seriously as an individual and addressed personally. Give importance to your Social Media community by liking comments and retweeting or re-posting relevant messages. Always give a salutation but, if possible, avoid a generic reply, such as "Dear guest" or similar;

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80   Remember that UNHCR-owned and branded SM accounts can only be created with permission from the Social Media Team (DER). This is to ensure all UNHCR digital properties are recorded and tracked and there is due process, quality control, branding and correct technical set-up at the back of platforms. Email socialmedia@unhcr.org for more information.

Step 2: Say thank you

Show your audience that UNHCR values candid feedback and always remember to say thank you in response to any feedback, comments or opinions expressed on your page.

Example of responses:
• "Thanks for sharing your experience. Together we can build a better future for refugees, other forcibly displaced communities and stateless people."
• "We agree XXX. Thank you for your support and for standing #WithRefugees."
• "Thank you XX for sharing your views, and your support for displaced people."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

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3. Responding to Negative Feedback

> ## ❗ Important
>
> When using Social Media to engage with communities, deleting content is a last-resort way to moderate conversations.
>
> UNHCR staff should immediately remove content if:
> - It contains personal data, i.e., any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). For more information about how to handle process this type of data, refer to the [UNHCR Data Protection Policy](#);
> - It may cause harm: Anyone sharing personal information relating to individual cases (their own or others) should have their comment removed. For example, PoCs may post comments with personal data such as their addresses, phone numbers or individual case numbers. This can put individuals at risk and must be deleted. Never discuss specific cases in a public space. After removing the message, always contact the person posting it, using the platform's private message function, and explain why it is not appropriate to post personal information;
> - It is Spam or Advertisement: When your account gets hit by spam, one off, or in a flurry, use the hide, delete and block functions as needed. Most spam attacks are short-lived and will abate in a short time;
> - It is hateful, discriminatory or xenophobic: Such comments should not only be removed immediately but should prompt an active engagement from UNHCR. See [Chapter 5](#) for more information.
>
> No matter how you decide to remove content, you must always state your criteria clearly, in a prominent place on your Social Media page. When deleting, always contact the author to explain why you have removed the post/message.

Responding to negative comments is difficult. It's natural to get upset. But criticism is a mirror that allows us to see ourselves and improve our work.

With negative feedback, you should always try to answer, no matter how bad it is. Give thoughtful consideration to politically sensitive topics, with possible reputational consequences for UNHCR. Bear in mind that the person writing may not be a native speaker to the language being used on Social Media and their comments may sound rude or abrasive when they do not mean to be.

Obviously, how you respond to negative feedback will vary from situation to situation. The guidelines below also apply to negative comments or feedback about partners or other community members or groups. When a person's feedback is negative engage with them directly. Show willingness to understand and sympathize with their experience. Offer them an easy way to reach someone in the organization, perhaps by giving direct contact information (if appropriate).

Provide space for managing Anger

The experience of conflict, displacement and abuse may increase a person's feelings of insecurity, frustration, fear or anger and make them inarticulate. On your Social Media channels, it is important to create an environment where PoCs can fully express their dissatisfaction, work through it and move on. Dealing with anger can be difficult and takes time. No single approach overcomes frustration and impatience. Be understanding: many PoCs have survived traumatic events and struggle with daily challenges. The wait for support and solutions can be devastating. You should respect and allow the expression of anger and not suppress it. Summarizing angry remarks may help reflect and clarify the intensity of feelings, de-escalating the conflict. Restate thoughts calmly and show you understand their feelings.

Source: UNHCR, Community-Based Protection in Action - Effective & Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement, 2016

Step 1: Address the person directly

Community members want to be heard individually and addressed personally. Greet them and if possible, address them by their account names;

! Important

Only delete negative comments if they break platform rules (eg. hate speech, spam, revealing personal information). It is better to respond calmly and clearly, even if you disagree or think their assertions are ungrounded.

Step 2: Say thank you

Show your audience that UNHCR values candid feedback, and always say thank you for comments (even the bad ones). The community must know that their opinions matter. If a negative comment has been submitted publicly, we should always answer it publicly, even if only to suggest taking the conversation to a private channel;

Things you could say to thank people for negative feedback/comment:
• "Thank you for your feedback. I'm sorry to hear you had such a frustrating experience but I really appreciate you bringing this issue to our attention."
• "Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We're sorry you had a bad experience. We'll try to do better."
• "Thanks for letting us know about this. Your feedback helps us to improve. We are looking into the issue and hope to resolve it promptly and fairly."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Step 3: Apologize and sympathize

Saying sorry shows you care about your community and that you can own up to your mistakes. Even if it's not your fault -- and there will be times when this is true – apologize anyway. People do not relate to organizations that are too perfect or too proud to admit mistakes. Note that while you should apologize when at fault, it can come across as unprofessional to be overly apologetic. Focus on your commitment to "lessons learnt" and "next steps" (e.g. how UNHCR can contact them directly);

Keep your apology short and sweet, like this:
• "We apologize that the services we provide/support did not satisfy your expectations."
• "We're so sorry you had a bad experience. Please tell us more."
• "UNHCR staff set a high standard for themselves, and we're so sorry to hear this was not met in your interaction with us."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Step 4: Take responsibility

Don't make excuses. Even if what happened was an isolated case, an unfortunate incident or an "off-day", acknowledge the person's experience. Provide reassurance that you hold yourself to high standards.

Things you could say:
- "We are sorry and we regret that we were not able to provide you with the service you needed."
- "We always aim to deliver a good service. But sometimes it may not happen for a variety of reasons. Thanks for taking the time to bring this to our attention. We will use the feedback to improve and take steps to prevent this from happening again."
- "Thank you for posting a message. We are sorry to hear that your experience was not what you expected. We would like the opportunity to understand your feedback further."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Negative feedback can include accusations of discrimination by UNHCR staff or partners, allegations of fraud, complaints that cases have been neglected or dissatisfaction that UNHCR has not spoken out about alleged human rights violations and abuses. UNHCR has a duty to investigate all allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff or partners, and all such issues should be referred to the appropriate channels. Systems to make official complaints should be explained clearly, in the relevant language, and if possible publicly, so all persons of concern are aware of the mechanisms.

Accusations that UNHCR or partners have been unable or unwilling to call out alleged human rights violations against displaced persons by host governments are a delicate matter. If this becomes a chorus of complaint, protection staff should involve senior management in the operation, and seek further support from external relations colleagues in the respective regional bureau. In the short term, you can remind persons of concern of the role and mandate of UNHCR and its partners, and the role of the host government and partners. Be very clear about responsibilities and duties. When problems are beyond UNHCR's power to solve, it is better to say so.

> **!** Important
>
> UNHCR has developed Trolling Guidelines that can help you identify and deal with trolls on Social Media. UNHCR does not have a significant trolling issue, considering the scale of the audience, accounts and issues we work on across the globe. However, incidents do arise, and this document frames some advice. Remember that with the CBP approach, you should always try to engage with your users first, before you draw the conclusion that they are trolls. Posting angry comments does not make someone a troll.

With comments that require longer and sometimes more complicated answers, the thing is NOT to ignore them but immediately acknowledge them publicly. Then you can take your time to develop a more precise answer, having discussed the issue with the relevant UNHCR units and colleagues. In these cases, try to provide Persons of Concern with a place where they can voice their complaints further. Always try to connect personally with whoever is submitting the comment(s).

Things you could say:
- "Thank you very much for reporting this. We take these allegations very seriously. Please feel free to contact our call center/office/desk at this phone number."
- "We have known about this issue for some time and are looking into it. The office/desk/ government agency that is investigating it can be contacted at this number XXX. The results will be made public on XXX date."
- "We understand that this issue is very frustrating. We assure you that UNHCR is doing its best to ensure these rights are respected, while respecting the sovereignty of the XX government. To report violations of human rights, please contact XX office and they will be able to explain the investigation process."
- "Thank you for reporting this issue to us. Org XX has been a long-standing partner for UNHCR and we will follow up with them immediately to investigate this issue further. If you wish, please feel free to contact them directly to report this issue. (Explain the reporting mechanism for the partner organization, or refer the person to the partner organization directly)."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Step 5: Provide clear and honest answers and follow up

Avoid set responses that do not address the issues raised. Be as specific as you can about the person's experience and communicate any changes or improvements you have made or will make as a result of their feedback. This is best done in a private conversation, and never compromising personal identifiable information. Keep the person updated if the issue requires time to be solved;

If there's nothing you can do to fix what happened, here's a way to respond, take ownership and promise to put things right in the future:
- "I am sorry for what happened. Unfortunately your situation was an exception. We can't fix the past but we promise to improve the way we work in future. Please accept our sincere apologies on behalf of everyone on the team."

This is just an example. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s)

Step 6: Close the feedback loop and make it visible

In cases where you have received input from other colleagues/partners, mention this in your response. By demonstrating that you have a link to operations/services, you can show that questions and feedback lead to programmatic responses. If you need to wait for answers, don't keep silent in the meanwhile. Inform your audience that you are working on finding a response. Address feedback consistently, and make sure you have a tracking system to follow up on any that requires specific actions. Always assign the response to someone and make sure you have realistic times of response. Respond publicly, explaining what you have done, why and how;

Things you could say:
• "Thank you for posting a message. We are sorry to hear that your experience was not what you expected. We now have all the information we need to investigate the issue further. Please give us XX days to reply."
• "Thanks for taking the time to bring this to our attention. UNHCR staff are right now looking at the information and we will reply as soon as possible."
• "We have looked at your feedback about issue XX and have resolved the problem. Here is what UNHCR has done."

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Step 7: Take the issue offline

If the issue that has surfaced in the feedback is a personal or sensitive one, it's best to talk about the problem offline. This is also the case if you notice that the person writing the comment is highly agitated or upset. In these situations, move the conversation to a place where they can relax and talk calmly. Make sure your office has created direct contact information that you can give the person to continue the conversation offline. If you cannot provide a physical space to meet the person, try to use private and secure communication systems, like Signal;[81]

Here are some messages that you could send in private:
• "We would like the opportunity to investigate your feedback further. Please could you provide us with your contact information, like an email address or a phone number? Or call our team at (phone number)? We'll work with you to resolve any issues as quickly as possible."
• "We are sorry that your experience didn't match your expectations. We would like to know why so that we can deliver a better experience next time. You may reach us anytime at (email address) or (phone number). Again, thank you for your feedback."

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81 See www.signal.org

These are just examples. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

Make sure to link existing hotline/call center staff and Social Media administrators, so both units are informed about the background of the case.

Step 8: Ask for a second chance

Don't close the door when you get negative comments. Rather, invite people of concern to come back. Not only does this give you a chance to change the conversation but it also establishes confidence in your ability to learn from your mistakes and improve engagement.

A suggested response to give:

- "Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. I'm very sorry we failed to meet your expectations. I would appreciate another chance to show you our commitment. Please call this number or provide us with your contact information so we can contact you."

This is just an example. Come up with your own responses according to the situation, not forgetting to use the appropriate language(s).

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4. Responding to Questions

Digital tools and Social Media in particular offer the opportunity to inform communities about important issues and facts and allow them to engage with the information interactively.

You will encounter different types of questions:

a) Questions about UNHCR procedures and systems

These questions should be the easiest to answer but nonetheless there are some things to keep in mind when answering them:

- Be specific about the questions asked. Don't copy and paste content from formal policy document but rather explain it so it directly answers the question;
- If the person has trouble understanding your reply, find out if they can go to a physical space (like a protection desk or call a hotline) to get an answer in person;
- If you can, use interactive ways to provide the answer, like a link to a video, audio file or series of images. Format matters. As much as possible, avoid websites with static, densely written text;
- Always check with external relations to see if they have material available to help you;
- Providing ill-informed advice on protection issues/rights/obligations can do harm, so make sure protection staff are regularly trained and knows how to translate complex information accurately into easily understandable content.

b) Questions about individual cases or specific situations

Even if you have warned PoCs not to disclose personal data on the platform, a person might still use it to ask questions about their own case. For this reason, you will have to make sure the followingis in place:

- A secure and confidential referral mechanism between the admins of the Social Media platform and Case Management;
- A pre-approved secure line that can be used to communicate back with the person asking the question (especially if they do not have access to a private mobile phone);
- The following drill in case the message was published publicly and contains personal data about the person involved:
- Contact the person posting the message, in private if you can, and explain that you will remove heir message to make sure their information is not accessible. Make sure to say that while you are removing the message, you are available to continue the conversation about their case in private;

- Remove the message and publish a public message explaining why you have done so, and possibly use this opportunity to remind people about how to use digital tools securely;

- Continue the conversation in private, using approved UNHCR tools to discuss sensitive information. If possible, refer directly to Case Management and always follow the UNHCR Data Protection Policy.

c) General questions about partners, the refugee situation and human rights

Given the complexity of the humanitarian system, and the many actors involved in the response, persons of concern are often confused about the respective mandates and responsibilities of the various actors involved, as well as the rights they have in a country. Sometimes, this conversation can be tricky for UNHCR and often the answer is not simple or applicable to all situations.

Make sure your process for creating content for this particular type of information is coordinated with all protection stakeholders and partners in the country. Additionally, resources may be available from External Relations, which manages the broader UNHCR-brand engagement strategy on Social Media.

! Important

For messages or comments that contain allegations of fraud or SEA, make sure you have established referral pathways that allow PoCs to be contacted offline immediately to make their statements. Always remove messages if they have identifiable information of the person accused or the accuser. See more on this in Chapter 8.

5. Create your own FAQ

A FAQ is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (with answers) on a particular topic. The format is used on websites where common questions tend to recur. The creation of a FAQ for a Social Media page helps address these questions immediately, while leaving staff more time to answer queries that are less common.[82]

Step 1: Gather Your Most Frequently Asked Questions

You must make sure the questions you include on your FAQ page reflect the concerns PoCs and their hosts actually want to raise on Social Media. If you guess what persons of concern might want to know, the result could be a FAQ page that is not very helpful. Instead, gather information on the kinds of questions your audience tends to have. To do this, you can look at existing data on the Social Media page, or if it is new, you can start with a small FAQ and expand as questions come in. This is why you should always track questions received via Social Media, including ones from direct messaging options;

Step 2: Write a Clear Answer for Each Question

The way you write FAQ answers is crucial. Think of your FAQ as being like a directory of answers. You want these to be the default, go-to answers for every question on the list. That means you should take the time to write them very clearly, using local languages. Each answer should be factually accurate, concise and straightforward. Aim to provide only the information someone will need and avoid the temptation to add extra details or go off on a tangent. Always test your FAQ with your audience and update it regularly, based on the questions that come in;

Step 3: Use Clear Navigation

Once you have your questions and answers, you're ready to start putting the actual page together. When you do, remember that the FAQ should be clear and easy to use. If it's too complicated to navigate, people will just give up;

Step 4: Place the FAQ Prominently on Your Social Media Page

Page placement is also crucial. No matter how strong your FAQ is, it won't matter if visitors can't find it. So make sure you place the page prominently in your Social Media account;

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82   Hersch, Russ. FAQs about FAQs. 8 January 1998

✎ Tips

- If you are creating a FAQ to be posted on a Social Media page, like Facebook or Twitter, pin it to the top of the page so people can easily find it.
- Include a link to your contacts page but ask visitors to check if their question is in the FAQ before contacting your team directly. That way, when people go to contacts to report a problem or ask a question, they'll be able to see answers to their most likely questions. This cuts down the volume of your work, enabling you to focus on non-standard cases.
- If you have the capacity, the FAQ can be used as the base to create a Messenger Bot. This answers FAQs automatically while more complicated questions go to staff.

📶 Step 5: Adjust Your FAQ as Needed

Your FAQ page should be alive. A static FAQ quickly becomes out of date and loses its appeal to readers. Make sure you update the page periodically, checking that all the answers are still accurate and the questions remain relevant. You do not want the page to end up cluttered with answers to queries about discontinued services.

Also, evaluate your answers with the community and rewrite them to be clearer, if necessary. Communication and collaboration with team members managing Social Media will be helpful here. If they're still getting asked about a question that's answered on your FAQ, this is a sign that the answer isn't making sense to the audience. With a little dedication and close attention to what your team and audience are saying, the FAQ should grow stronger and more useful over time.

💬 Messaging Apps

One difference between Social Media platforms and Messaging Apps is that the latter do not have space to allow for static messages to be always on top, as a pinned post would be on Social Media. So it is helpful to make a FAQ document available to people managing the Messaging App, which they can use to respond directly.

Alternatively, third party softwares let Messaging Apps' API create hybrid systems that allow for the use of a chat bot. This automatically answers questions while humans deal with queries the bot cannot understand/respond to.

For more information, see ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party, Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps, January 2017

Resourcing

Resourcing considerations vary when you are planning to engage with persons of concern using Social Media. They depend on your chosen modality and operational complexity but all point to the extent you can manage the engagement required by the tools, and match PoCs' expectations.

- **Respond publicly to public content to increase trust and educate your audience:** Having one-to-one conversations on Social Media has the advantage of engaging an individual and creating a feeling of confidentiality. On the other hand, engaging publicly brings others in at the same time and educates the audience about the issue at hand. This decreases the likelihood of the same questions/issues being raised again;

- **Rely on PoCs and local partners:** Engaging with communities on issues that are vital to them must be done using the right language and cultural references. This is why engagement with communities, including online, is based on a CBP approach, where ownership and management of the project should be incorporated as a given;

- **Connect and work with other UNHCR colleagues:** Engaging with PoCs publicly can have an impact on the way UNHCR is perceived in the country. External Relations colleagues have the experience to help you understand how to manage conversations online. This will save you from investing additional resources;

- **Use your FAQ as the best way to prioritize resources:** Good FAQs will save time and resources dedicated to answering the same questions over and over again. Make sure you update the FAQ frequently and make it easy to understand and navigate, guided by what PoCs actually want to know.

✔ Do's

DO ask questions in a light but serious manner, no matter how absurd the initial enquiry/comment may sound to you.

DO explain who you are and why you are there. Have a sound reason for your Social Media account, with clear goals. Explain the benefits both for UNHCR and the community.

DO address people honestly, even if you know you cannot give them all the answers they want.

DO discuss with the community and partners, and make clear on your Social Media account, the ground rules and responsibilities. Establish joint problem-solving mechanisms and a system for regular feedback.

DO stay alert for discriminatory behavior/attitudes that can emerge on your Social Media account.

✕ Don'ts

DO NOT make assumptions and be aware of how your behavior can send the wrong message.

DO NOT assume people will come to your page just because you are UNHCR. Ask yourself what they would get out of visiting your account.

DO NOT give only partial information. This can lead to distrust, especially if it concerns resources, and create false expectations or dissatisfaction. If you need more time to provide an answer, be honest and explain this.

**DO NOT** dismiss the importance of regular Participatory Assessments. These should take place more than once a year, even if your Social Media page has a high level of likes/followers.

DO NOT ban people just because they have engaged in one of these behaviors (if it is the first time). Talk to them about why their behavior is discriminatory and give them a chance to engage constructively.

Check List

Have you defined the purpose and scope of your engagement strategy, in other words when and how you will engage?

Have you discussed your engagement strategies with external relations colleagues in your operation?

Have you discussed the response guidelines with stakeholders, and adapted them to the context?

Have you designed and tested your SOPs to handle protection disclosures, including GBV or SEA disclosure? Can you refer sensitive conversations to a safer space, if need be?

Have you identified the skills and knowledge that will be required by UNHCR or its partners to engage meaningfully and properly on Social Media?

Have you trained all staff engaging with PoCs online on the agreed engagement strategy?

Have you discussed, coordinated and collectively drafted a FAQ page to be posted on the top of your account?

Have you discussed with the community your content removal policy and posted it on the top of your page?

Have you created a system to track feedback with relevant disaggregated data so you can analyze and learn from it?
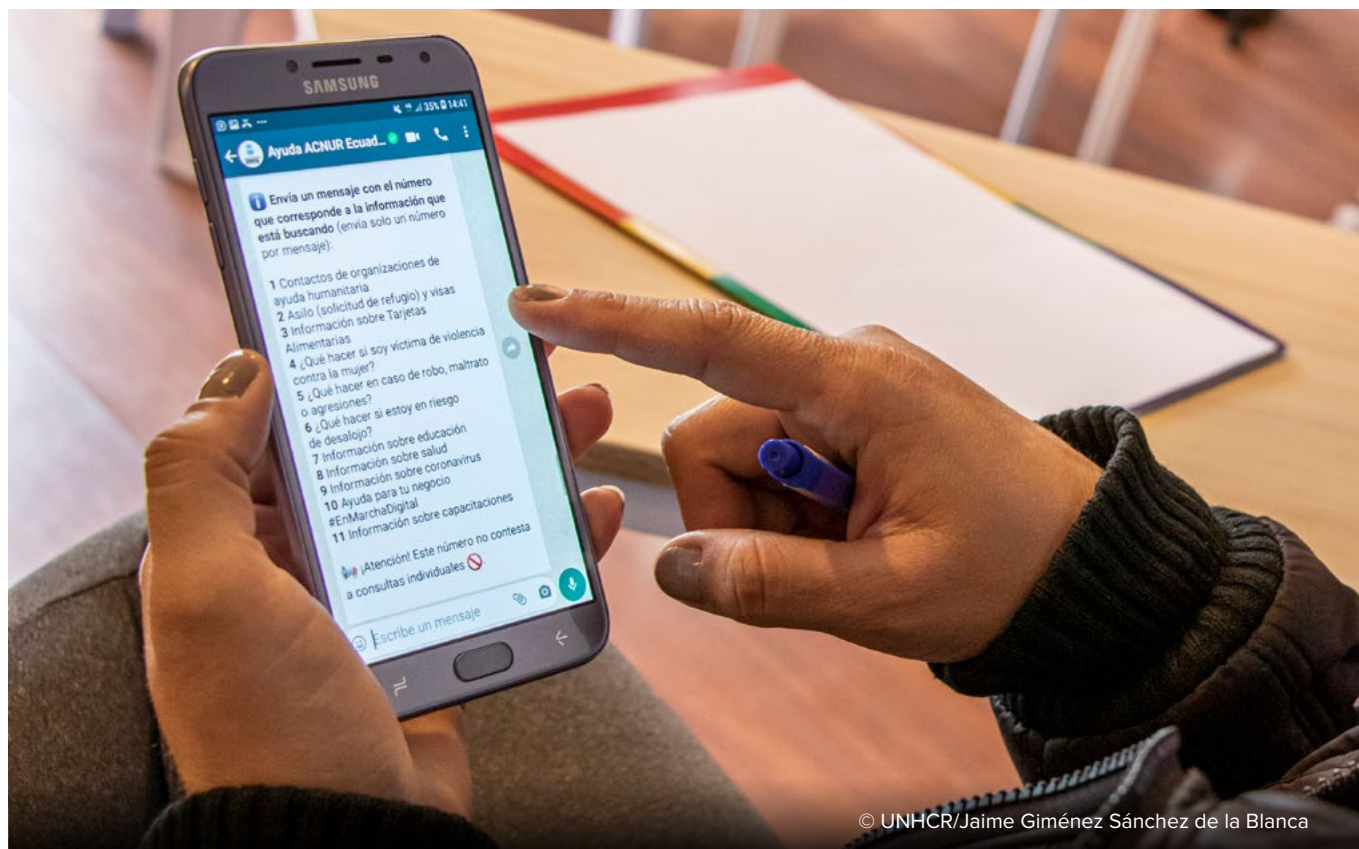
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- [UNICEF, Case Study: How a Nonprofit Uses Facebook to Drive Change, 2013](#)

- [Lisa Cornish, To Engage or Not to Engage: Combating Fake News on Social Media, 2019](#)

- [CDAC Network, Collective Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action, 2019](#)

- [CDAC Network, 101 Seminar Report: Social Media in Emergencies, 2013](#)

Chapter 5

Moderation and Sensitive Content

Introduction

This chapter looks at how to use Social Media for conversations around sensitive issues that affect PoCs' rights. It explains how to moderate content online and how to use Social Media for constructive dialogue.

Forced displacement is often a politicized issue that affects how people of concern are perceived by host communities, and vice-versa. Sometimes these perceptions manifest as polarized conversations on Social Media, with the risk of adverse consequences for PoCs and their human rights.[83] Given UNHCR's role and visibility, the organization is often at the receiving end of anger and frustration. Sometimes these exchanges happen directly on our CBP Social Media accounts.

Here "sensitive content" means content that can harm PoCs, UNHCR or partners. Sensitive content is normally:[84]
- **Contextual:** What is sensitive in one context may not be in another;
- **Temporary:** Sensitivity will change over time, increasing or decreasing;
- **Relational:** Information may not be sensitive per se but can become sensitive if combined with other data, or if it is taken out of a dataset.

In this Chapter, we address "sensitive content" along with content that is "violent" or "offensive", including hate speech, derogatory remarks, insults, etc.

Engaging with PoCs on Social Media, particularly to moderate discussions, is difficult but very important. Content moderation is the act of applying guidelines to text, images and videos that appear on Social Media accounts or websites, often with a focus on user submissions.

Content moderation is used here to indicate:
- Actions like monitoring and identifying potentially harmful content;
- Assessing whether content complies with the site's guidelines, Community Rules, Code of Conduct and relevant UNHCR Policies and Guidance;
- Actions that involve UNHCR or partners in conversations that could potentially lead to harmful content or behavior. The intent is to influence the conversation positively;
- Actions to support peace building and reconciliation, and to counter xenophobia and racism.

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83 Keep in mind that here we are not just talking about protection concerns (threats and risks) created by online activity, e.g., due to the data/information about individuals or the PoC community that is shared or disclosed. We also have in mind information used to influence the way PoCs and host communities perceive each other; as a way to increase discrimination against certain groups; or as a way to influence decisions made by vulnerable populations in need.

84 Adapted from Protection Information Management (PIM) Initiative, PIM Training Resource Pack, Module 5.1: PIM Sensitivities, http://pim.guide/uncategorized/pim-training-resource-pack

Moderating content is a delicate task, often involving additional processes that go beyond the work of vetting violent or extremist content and protecting PoC's personal information. Moderation also carries risks, including reputational and organizational risks that should be spelled out in your Risk Assessment.[85]

1 Types of Content Moderation

> ## ! Important
>
> Normally, communities and individuals develop mechanisms to cope with and respond to the protection problems they face. In many situations, they will already be dealing with the problem, although they may welcome extra support. However, there may be situations where community members do not recognize a practice as a protection risk or a violation of human rights, and there will be no community response or the response might be inadequate. This is often the case for online conversations, where there is a sense of perceived anonymity and/or detachment from consequences. When the community response does not meet international human rights standards, we should work with people to change it.

The content moderation method that makes most sense for you will depend on your Social Media goals and tools, and the operational context. Among the various types of content moderation, the most common are:[86]

I. Pre-Moderation

This involves all user submissions being placed in a queue for moderation before they are displayed on the site/Social Media page. Through pre-moderation, it is possible to keep all sensitive content off a site by checking every comment, image or video. However, if the CBP program requires immediacy and barrier-free engagement, this method can make it look as if the platform is being censored, which may erode trust and limit transparency. This method is best for Social Media accounts that need high levels of protection, such as those frequented by children;

This type of moderation is possible on Facebook, where you ask to review all posts and comments before they go public.

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85 See more on Risk Assessment in Chapter 2.
86 Daniel Smith, The Essential Guide to Content Moderation, August 05, 2019

II. Post-Moderation

When user engagement is important but a comprehensive moderation program is still required, post-moderation is often a good choice. It allows users to publish their submissions immediately but also adds them to a queue to be reviewed. This allows for immediacy but enables moderators to monitor behavior. This can put pressure on a moderator, who has to approve every comment. Sensitive issues posted publicly must be detected and removed very quickly, which means you need a 24/7 moderation system;

III. Reactive Moderation

For a manageable program that relies on the community, reactive moderation is a possible solution. This type of moderation asks users to flag any content they find offensive or that breaches Community Guidelines. By involving PoCs in the process, reactive moderation directs attention to the content that most needs it. However, there is a risk that offensive or sensitive content will remain online for longer, which could damage the reputation of the account (and organization). For reactive moderation, there must be substantial investment in training and capacity-building for both users and managers;

IV. Supervisor Moderation

Similar to reactive moderation, supervisor moderation involves selecting a group of moderators from the online community. Also known as unilateral moderation, the system gives certain users the right to edit or delete submissions. If supervisors are selected carefully, this method can remove sensitive content promptly and works well as the community grows. However, it is prone to fail if moderators miss offensive text, images or video;

This type of moderation is the one used by the UNHCR Lebanon office in managing their Facebook Community Page.

V. Commercial Content Moderation (CCM)

CCM involves outsourcing moderation to specialists, which for UNHCR could mean local organizations or NGOs. They would be tasked with ensuring that content abides by Community Guidelines, user agreements and the legal frameworks for the particular site and country. Since the work is done by specialists, a good standard of moderation is usually guaranteed. This way you can pass difficult or controversial conversations to trained experts;

This method is best suited to conflict situations or conversations that are highly polarized. See here an example of outsourced moderation.

VI. Distributed Moderation

As one of the most hands-off moderation systems, distributed moderation places a lot of trust and control with the community. It usually involves allowing users to rate or vote on submissions, flagging content which goes against guidelines. It often takes place under the guidance of experienced moderators and can work well if a Social Media page/group has a large, active community;

VII. Automated Moderation

Automated moderation is increasingly popular. As the name suggests, it uses various tools, including AI or artificial machine learning,[87] to filter, flag and reject user submissions. These tools can range from simple filters, which search for banned words or block certain IP addresses, to machine learning algorithms, which detect inappropriate content in images and video. If you decide to use these tools,[88] combine them with some kind of human moderation. Automated moderation can be also helpful if there are different languages on your site, as algorithms are getting better at working with multiple languages.

See an example of automated moderation, paired with a human component, on this WHO project to provide information about COVID-19.

How to create your own moderation strategy

No matter what type of moderation you choose, a moderation strategy for your Social Media content should always include the following elements, which are explained below:
  a) Criteria to identify or flag content;
  b) Strategies for different types of content identified;
  c) Monitoring of the process to decide adjustments.

a) Criteria to identify or flag content

Having a clear matrix to indicate which content requires moderation not only helps to organize work internally but also builds trust in your transparency, if you share with your audience on Social Media. Normally content is flagged if it falls under these categories:

  • Content that violates human rights, rule of law or code of conduct/community rules. This includes hate speech, offensive language and content the platform considers sensitive (e.g. depictions of blood or violence);

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87   Find more information on Cambridge Consultants, Use of AI in online content moderation, report produced on behalf of OfCom, 2019

88   AI in general presents several issues that may be of concern for data privacy and security, and that may reinforce biases and exclusion. For this reason it is always best to involve ICT, UNHCR Innovation and DES in decisions about using these tools.

- Content that, while not containing anything violent or sensitive, could affect peoples' decision-making or actions. This is the most difficult to moderate because it may not be obviously dangerous. Most of the time this content boils down to misinformation, disinformation or rumors but it also includes Personal Data and information about protection incidents and locations, etc.

Resource

See Chapter 6 for more on how to handle rumors and misinformation on Social Media.

Within these categories you can specify what content you consider unsuitable and the types of conversations that would promote your objectives. The best way to do this is to engage the community itself in drafting a "Code of Conduct" or "House Rules" for the Social Media account/page. This develops a sense of ownership from the outset.

b) Strategies for different types of content

Defining what content needs to be flagged is of course a participatory process. It directly affects our ability to raise the community's awareness about human rights, particularly the rights of women and children.

When deciding your strategy to moderate content, try whenever possible to:

- Use workshops and discussions to analyze the community's rights practices online. Which rights are being respected and by whom? It can be helpful to compare online human rights standards with community values and identify areas where they coincide. Discussion points can include:[89]

  a) whether all people can exercise their rights;

  b) if not, why some people are excluded;

  c) which rights are not being respected and why;

  d) who is a rights holder and who has a duty.

  This can lead to discussions about what the community needs to do to improve PoCs' enjoyment of their rights on Social Media. You can agree on what constitutes a protection risk online and how respect for individual rights on Social Media should inform any online protection response;

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89 Here we are talking about using Social Media to engage the community on human rights issues in their context; also to discuss 'online rights' and issues such as privacy and confidentiality.

- Discuss possible responses to moderated content with the community concerned. Facilitate discussions with community members about how offensive or sensitive content can negatively affect individuals and have an impact on family and/or community;

- Find the root of a negative or harmful practice and ask why it is considered important or valuable. Identify possible opportunities for consciousness-raising. Which individuals or groups might be willing to work for change?

- Ensure that people have understood which online practices are unacceptable and why, and see to it that UNHCR and its partners do not support such practices;

- In cases where the community does not recognize the harm a practice could do to an individual, UNHCR should intervene directly. This requires careful consideration because a proper response must go beyond immediate safety and/or the restitution of rights and avoid negative consequences both for those affected and those intervening.

c) Monitoring content moderation to inform adjustments

It is important to monitor the frequency and topics of sensitive content being posted on our pages/groups. Apart from doing an AGD analysis of the participants, it is useful to look at how their conversations relate to the situation on the ground. How do users behaving in a certain way respond to UNHCR policies and communication guidelines?

Monitoring the moderated content can also clarify the extent to which additional resources may be needed or moderation strategies must be adjusted.

Often sensitive topics surface online because of:

- the operational context on the ground – this could be a new influx of refugees from a neighboring country or an event that hardens public opinion against IDPs;

- the ability of UNHCR and partners to educate and involve communities in the process;

- the online rights landscape in the country, where regulation of online behavior and enforcement may vary (see Chapter 1).

2. Moderating Angry, Abusive or Inappropriate Comments

Going through conflict, abuse and forced displacement can make persons of concern very emotional and at the same time unable to put their feelings into words. Accountability means taking them seriously and listening to what they have to say, regardless of whether we agree or disagree with, and like or dislike, their views.

Communication can be difficult if anger, insecurity or fatigue, plus, in some cases, having to speak in a foreign language, impede PoC's ability to express themselves. Under pressure, distressed people may say things that seem offensive or inappropriate without meaning to be aggressive.[90]

When dealing with such angry/abusive comments or posts, consider the following:

If this is the first time you have interacted with the person, or the first time the person has interacted in this way, always give him/her the chance to understand why their message comes across as offensive and to engage differently next time. Reach out to and engage (privately, if possible) with the person to understand if their offensive language may have come out of frustration or simply be a way to attract attention;

If the inappropriate content is posted publicly by an influencer or someone known and recognized as an authority on the matter, don't remain silent but immediately engage publicly and directly. (If there are possible consequences for UNHCR's reputation and brand, tackle this with support from External Relations);

Always put the person talking to you at the center of the interaction and ensure that they feel heard, valued, understood and respected. Paraphrase what they have said in constructive, positive language to show you have listened and understood correctly and that it matters to you. Acknowledge different viewpoints and reconcile potential misunderstandings. Try to answer questions as concretely as possible. Observe how the conversation evolves and if your de-escalation techniques are working. Sometimes people just want to vent and allowing them to do that may be all they need.

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90 See more about this on UNHCR, Community-Based Protection in Action - Effective & Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement, 2016

Tips

When dealing with angry remarks, remember:
- Summarizing angry remarks (removing inappropriate language, if there is any) may clarify and reflect their feelings, while de-escalating conflict;
- Restating thoughts calmly shows you understand their feelings;
- Being patient allows for the full expression of anger;
- Accepting the other's emotions creates trust;
- The anger is likely to be aimed at the situation and not at you personally;
- Putting yourself in the other person's shoes helps you gain perspective on their situation;
- Asking questions purposefully clears up misunderstandings and makes the person feel understood.

From UNHCR, Community-Based Protection in Action - Effective & Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement, 2016

It is a different matter if the offensive messages constitute a pattern, meaning you could be dealing with a troll. Then the best approach is to remove content, always posting a message explaining why you have done so.

Comments or messages that violate the rule of law or incite to violence:
- If someone posts hateful messages, or threatens you, your colleagues or PoCs, delete the comments;
- If needed, print the comments or make screenshots and inform the UNHCR security team;
- All Social Media platforms have mechanisms through which you can report abusive behavior.
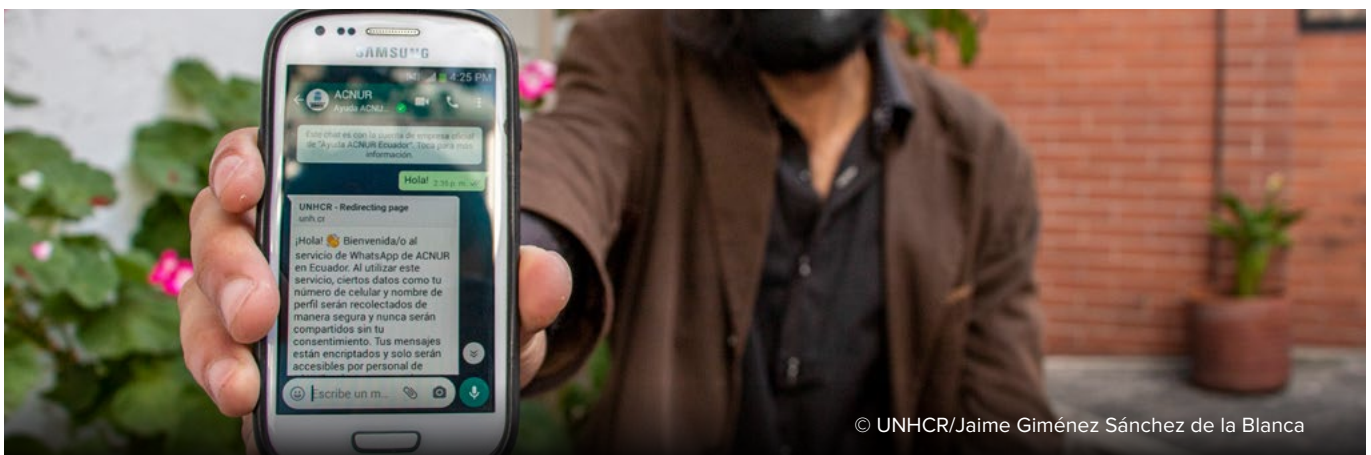
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3. Moderating Polarizing Conversations

Over the last decade, researchers working to understand the impacts of emerging information and communications technology (ICTs) posit that political groupings have become siloed, polarizing public discourse. Moving people from passively accepting something that escalates conflict to trying to achieve dialogue in their society is a huge challenge. But numerous initiatives that leverage ICTs to encourage constructive online dialogue have emerged around the world.[91]

Resource

Find information on how to deal with tension and conflict between groups of People of Concern (section 1.3) and tension and conflict between People of Concern and host communities (section 1.4) in the "UNHCR Manual on Security of People of concern"

No matter what your project, and what Social Media you use, you will probably have to moderate polarizing or political conversations on the rights of Persons of Concern.

UNHCR's role in managing and engaging with PoCs on digital platforms is to make sure interactions take the form of a dialogue. We want participants to read and respond to each other's comments, asking questions for mutual understanding rather than to prove a point. In this way they can build on each other's ideas.

Different strategies work best when combined together:

- **Leading by example:** UNHCR leads by example in the way it speaks and engages online. Entering polarizing conversations to try to change the tone and narratives that accompany conflicts has proved to be very effective;
- **Online education activities:** UNHCR has a leading role in educating PoCs to engage constructively online. This starts with clear and well explained Community Rules for our Social Media presence. But active engagement can also take the form of polls, online quizzes or dedicated educational campaigns focusing on human rights;

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91   Build Up, Building The Commons, 2018

- **Offline activities:** This encompasses all the usual work UNHCR does in a country on human rights, xenophobia and protection, from dealing with governments and law makers to helping persons of concern and grassroots organizations on the ground.

Resources

In May 2020, Over Zero developed a guide called "Counteracting Dangerous Narratives in the Time of COVID-19" to offer insights into preventing worsening division and identity-based violence. Access the full guide here and the summary here.

Generally speaking, the following online behaviors support dialogue:

- **Suspension of judgment while listening and speaking:** When we suspend judgment and listen, we open the door to understanding. When we speak without judgment, we encourage others to listen to us;[92]
- **Respect for differences:** Everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective that only they can bring;[93]
- **Role and status suspension:** All participants and their contributions are essential to the whole view. No one perspective is more important than another. Dialogue is about 'power with', not 'power over';[94]
- **Balancing inquiry and advocacy:** In dialogue, we inquire to understand another's perspectives and offer our own for consideration. The intention is to bring out assumptions and relationships and gain new insights;[95]
- **Focus on learning:** We aim to learn from each other and expand our understanding, not compete to see who has the "best" view. When we are focused on learning, we tend to ask more questions and try new things. We are willing to open up to see what is working for us and what we might want to change. We want to hear from all parties to get the advantage of differing perspectives.[96]

Whether you are doing a Social Media project that tackles online polarization or dealing with sporadic interventions on your SM account, engaging conflicted communities to discuss protection issues on Social Media demands a lot of skills and requires all the actors to work together. Within UNHCR, you can always reach out to DER, DIP and DRS.

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92 Center for Whole Communities, A Brief Orientation to Dialogue, 2006
93 Alison Jones, Speaking Together: Applying the Principles and Practice of Dialogue, 1996
94 Portland University, Capstone Project, The Difference between Dialogue and Debate, unknown
95 Bruce Mohst, Choose your Communication Tool — Debate or Dialogue?, 2015
96 Gary Hall, The Importance of Questioning, 2016

Resourcing

Online content moderators need the same skills as traditional meeting moderators, plus familiarity with the SM platform used. Consider the following when determining the resources you will need for moderation on Social media:

- **Know the landscape:** Make sure you have used your Situation Analysis[97] to understand the existing landscape when it comes to digital rights and how people interact online with each other and with UNHCR. Knowing what to expect is the first step to designing a tailored response strategy;

- **Go hyper-local when you can:** Moderation and conversations about sensitive issues online are strongly affected by the language used and by cultural perceptions. Online moderators should always be from the same culture and speak the same language as the community. If you can, and after considering risks of bias and polarization, and possible safeguarding issues, engage them directly from among the PoCs you work with;

- **Always engage with Public Information/External Relations and colleagues in the operation:** Online conversations about sensitive topics and human rights can affect the way UNHCR is perceived in the country, and by PoCs. Since they manage the operation's Social Media accounts, External Relations have the experience to help you deal with sensitive conversations online;

- **Take every chance to engage your community:** If you find yourself removing content for any reason, explain yourself and engage your community to discuss why the content had to be removed. Use that opportunity to suggest why certain tones/words are unacceptable;

- **Be honest:** If there are topics you cannot or do not want to discuss, make it clear why, e.g. via House Rules. The more you clarify the boundaries of your engagement with people, the less you will have to moderate it;

- **Always connect with offline work:** UNHCR is often involved in projects that put peace-building, peaceful coexistence and integration at the heart of efforts to protect PoC's rights. These projects take the form of guided dialogues and other community activities on the ground. Make sure you always connect with these activities to have a coordinated approach to community engagement.

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97 See Chapter 1 for more information on Situation Analysis

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
DO get together with the community to identify what content is sensitive. Consider cultural values when it comes to online rights and conversations.	**DO NOT** assume you know the intentions of your interlocutors, even if you think they are being unfair or might even be trolling.
DO respond and stay calm, no matter how angry or upset the other person is. Always provide opportunities for a constructive dialogue.	**DO NOT** delete messages without explaining why to the rest of the community.
DO make maximum use of local partners and PoCs to manage Social Media projects that address peaceful co-existence, reconciliation and integration.	**DO NOT** set up a Social Media account without having an online moderation strategy planned.
DO use the right advocates within the community, who are normally far more effective than external figures, such as UNHCR staff.	**DO NOT** expose your advocates or staff to security risks and always make sure you update your Risk Assessment.
DO engage men and boys and invite them to online discussions on issues such as masculinity, fatherhood, gender equality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence. This fosters the equality and empowerment of women.	**DO NOT** shut down a conversation just because UNHCR lacks an official position on a subject (or prefers not to make it public). You may not be speaking for UNHCR but you can still reflect a rights-based approach.
DO work with the community, ensuring all vulnerable groups are included and represented. Make the community aware of their rights and obligations through accessible and appropriate content.	**DO NOT** assume that everyone knows what sensitive content is, and what constitutes hate speech.

Check List

Have you discussed and agreed with all stakeholders, including communities, what needs to be moderated on Social Media, and why? ☐

Have you identified local actors, e.g. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), already moderating sensitive issues on Social Media from whom you could learn? ☐

Do you have a grasp of the resources, challenges, regulations and law around hate speech, incitement to violence or any other limitations to freedom of speech? ☐

Have you identified what is 'sensitive' content in your operational context? ☐

Have you coordinated and discussed your moderation requirements with external relations? ☐

When discussing your moderation strategy, did you involve communities and stakeholders to ensure diverse representation? ☐

Have you used an AGD lens to look at risks, possible victims of online rights violations and possible solutions? ☐

Do you know the terms of reference or community guidelines that apply to the Social Media platform you want to use? ☐

Have you assessed the existing skills and capacity to moderate online conversations within UNHCR and with partners? ☐

Have you created and shared widely your community guidelines (House Rules) for content moderation on your Social Media channel? ☐

Have you worked out when and how often you will train staff on managing sensitive content and abusive conversations? What skills might they need to develop, strengthen or refresh? ☐

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Case Studies

Build Up, The Commons, a Pilot Methodology for Addressing Polarization Online, 2018

UNDP, Analyzing Refugee-Host Community Narratives on SOCIAL MEDIA in Lebanon, 2019

UNHCR Innovation, Teaching a 'Robot' to Detect Xenophobia Online,2018

UNHCR, Protection from Xenophobia, An Evaluation of UNHCR's Regional Office for Southern Africa's Xenophobia Related Programs, 2015

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Chapter 6

Rumors and Misinformation

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how to use Social Media to identify, debunk and stop rumors and misinformation that can adversely affect PoCs and their hosts and deprive them of their rights. It suggests steps to create a sustainable workflow to address rumors and misinformation online.

Definitions

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information, spread accidentally.
Disinformation is deliberate and includes propaganda and malicious content, such as hoaxes and phishing.[98]

Misinformation and disinformation are elements of "fake news", defined by scholars as "fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent."[99] Remember, the main difference between misinformation and disinformation is that the former is accidental while the latter comes will ill intent, but both are dangerous.[100]

Misinformation is inaccurate and shown to be so; it has previously been disproved. By contrast, a **Rumor** is a statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed.

A rumor is unverified information passed from person to person.[101] It has negative connotations, often being dismissed as idle talk or gossip. But rumors are neither good nor bad. They can be true or false, or partly true.

Persons of concern come across different types of misinformation, disinformation and rumors, both on Social Media and offline. They include official information that is inadequate or presented inadequately, outdated information, misinformation via gatekeepers and other mediators, information giving false hope, distorted information and rumors.

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98 Woolley, Samuel C., Howard, Philip N., Political Communication, Computational Propaganda, and Autonomous Agents, International Journal of Communication, 2016

99 Lazer, David M. J., Baum, Matthew A., Benkler, Yochai, et all, The Science of Fake News, Science, 2018

100 My T. Thai, Weili Wu, Hui Xiong (edited by), Big Data in Complex and Social Networks, 2016

101 Di Fonzo, N. and Bordia, P., Rumor Psychology: Social and Organizational Approaches, 2007

Resources

- CDAC Network, "Rumour has it: A practice guide to working with rumours." June 2017

- Internews, "Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Internews Rumour Tracking Methodology", 2020

Humanitarians know that to deliver appropriate and sustainable solutions, we must listen to affected people, respond to what they tell us and include them in every part of our response. We can't just be listening when they tell us things we agree with. Information is relative. One person's 'rumor' may seem like a 'fact' to another or completely ridiculous to a third. It's all about perspective, and that is going to be influenced by how much information you have access to and how much you trust it.[102]

Rumors can be misinformation or disinformation depending on the intent behind them:
- Misinformation is incorrect information spread by people not meaning to deceive;
- Disinformation is incorrect information spread deliberately to deceive or manipulate.

A rumor can switch between these categories as it spreads through a community. For example, a human trafficker can spread a rumor among PoCs about how easy life is in Europe with the intent to deceive (disinformation). A PoC then passes this rumor to their friends and family, not meaning to deceive (misinformation). While motives may vary, the impact is the same – people are unable to make informed choices about their future and the consequences can be devastating.

In the last five years, more and more organizations have started to implement and manage so-called "Rumor Tracking Mechanisms". Rumors cannot be ignored. They threaten lives and cause suffering for the people we are trying to help, undermining our humanitarian mission.

Resource

Find more information on how to deal with verbal harassment and the spread of rumors in the "UNHCR Manual on Security of People of Concern", section 1.13

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102 Internews, Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Internews Rumour Tracking Methodology, 2020

1. Types of Rumor Tracking Mechanisms

Misinformation and rumors are the price we pay for being able to share information across borders on Social Media. UNHCR has an obligation to counter rumors that can be detrimental to the protection of PoCs. But we cannot cover the entire internet with a mantle of safety. For this reason, it is important to define the boundaries of your rumor tracking mechanisms in advance.

Tackling rumors doesn't mean you necessarily have to set up a dedicated system or tracking mechanism. You can embed rumor tracking into existing communication systems, like a feedback mechanism or community Social Media page. No matter how you do it, the required steps to detect and debunk rumors are the same.

For rumor tracking to be done properly and be sustainable, it can only be implemented with a Community-Based Approach, one that necessarily involves a variety of stakeholders from UNHCR, partners and PoCs and hosts to government authorities (as appropriate).

Here are some different types of rumor tracking systems:

Integrated systems: Normally these are the most sustainable to set up. They use multiple systems, offline and online, to gather and debunk rumors. An example might be a Facebook page that counters rumors with verified information. Or it could be a community structure on the ground that collects rumors doing the rounds locally and shares accurate information; or an email newsletter, shared with local media so they can deal with rumors along with the humanitarian community;

Stand-alone systems: Rumor tracking can also be done using one tool at a time. For example, you could create a mechanism just for WhatsApp. Such systems can be set up quicker than integrated systems but are limited in their reach. Stand-alone rumor tracking normally relies on a network of trusted people who have influence in the community. The system reinforces and supports existing information nodes;

Rumor tracking as a by-product of existing mechanisms: You can make a rumor tracking mechanism part of an existing mechanism. For example, call centers used to collect and follow up on feedback and complaints from PoCs would be ideal for rumor tracking too. Depending on the questions coming in and the things people say they have heard, rumors can be collected and debunked, and the results shared with everyone in the humanitarian community to make them aware of the risks.

Rumors can be caught and collected actively or passively. This depends on the magnitude of the problem in a given context and the resources you have to combat it. For example, you can monitor your Social Media page to detect rumors or misinformation posted by PoCs and respond to them. Or you can ask people specifically to report rumors and work together to debunk them.

> ## ! Important
>
> If you ask people to report rumors, make sure they do this privately to avoid the rumors spreading even further. The same applies to debunking a rumor. While debunking it, avoid giving it life by repeating it. For example, if the rumor is "White people have brought Ebola to Liberia to kill us", the response should be information that explains the origins of Ebola and the role of organizations in the country fighting it.

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2. Detect and Respond to Rumors

[CDAC Network](#) and [Internews](#) have both published manuals on how to deal with rumors in humanitarian settings. While using slightly different classifications, both guides suggest the following steps:

Step 1: Know your community

UNHCR offices wanting to set up stand-alone rumor tracking systems should conduct a Social Media Information Needs Assessment.[103] This will identify the sources of rumors believed by the community; the information channels through which they spread; reliable sources who can counter with verified information in preferred languages and links between rumors online and events on the ground. If possible, it should be paired with offline conversations to fill in the gaps of the online assessment and involve the community in the design of the rumor tracking mechanism. Always try to involve the community at the start of the project to identify problems and jointly find solutions.

Step 2: Establish and use Community-Based Networks

Build your rumor tracking project with the community. When possible, UNHCR should ask members of the online community to report the rumors they hear. Establishing a community network can work well because individuals are already trusted and understand the social, political, cultural and religious context. With a new online network, the focus might be solely on catching rumors. A two-way channel would help you communicate the outcome of your verification efforts.

Make sure to pick people who represent diverse groups. Then you will be able to develop a network that reaches deep into the community. Consider existing Facebook groups or WhatsApp Trees, women's or youth groups, traditional community structures and local NGOs and CSOs Members of the network should have credibility; you want people to trust them. It takes time to build relationships but together you can stop the spread of rumors.

Step 3: Design and set up of the system infrastructure

Rumor tracking mechanisms work to a schedule, which means your workflows and systems need to be set up, tested and possibly adjusted over time, especially at the beginning of the project.

Firstly, you have to build your team: choose your "rumor monitors" and trusted sources on the ground. The more existing organizations and local structures you can involve in your mechanism, the better (see below). Remember, the best people to detect rumors and understand how likely they are to be believed are community members themselves. This also applies when it comes to managing the system.

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103 See [Chapter 1](#) for more on Information Needs Assessment.

Secondly, you must identify the data management channels for your tracking mechanism and set up systems that will allow you to verify, respond and act on rumors received. This will include SOPs for urgent information, including SEA; log books to standardize the recording and classification of rumours and thereby facilitate data analysis; and decision matrices for verifying the rumours.

✎ Tip

While it is important to decide early on how exactly you might collect information about rumors, the actual collection should not begin until you have all processes in place. Without clearly defined ways to respond to the information collected, share it efficiently or ensure the rumour tracking system works, your project will very quickly lose the trust of the community. A workflow for rumor tracking should be a continuous cycle, centered round the community.

However you choose to listen, it is essential to log rumors as part of the reporting process. Good practice is to note them down in a log book, register or electronic spreadsheet. Record the details and classify them, keeping a note of any actions taken:

- Keeping a rumor log will enable you to analyze trends, patterns and recurring issues, as well as share information with other organizations in the community;
- UNHCR offices that already have a mechanism to deal with feedback should try to embed the rumor tracking system within the one for feedback, or at least make the two systems inter-operable.

📖 Resource

Internews, "Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Internews Rumour Tracking Methodology", 2020, Part 3. See annexes for templates of logbooks and ways to collect feedback.

To allow for fast and efficient data management, you can categorize rumors by type and by the likelihood they will be believed and the harm they could do – and establish hierarchies of urgency based on that. Later, you can prioritize your rumor verification process.

Do a thorough analysis of the recorded rumours, looking for recurring types, themes and sub-themes. What rumors are most likely to jeopardize the community and humanitarian organizations working there? Be on alert for rumors that could make the community distrust or abandon services, or worse provoke violence or chaos.

> **! Important**
>
> Rumors differ from feedback. The fact that many people report them does not make them any more relevant. A rumor spread by the wrong influencer, at the wrong time, can do more damage than one that is widely believed but relatively harmless. When the majority of the population reports the same rumor, we are too late. Rumors should be stopped before they spread.

📶 Step 4: Collect rumors

The Internews and CDAC guides go into detail about the different ways you can collect rumors. There are two categories:
1. Passive collection;
2. Active collection.

Passive collection includes all the systems that allow you to "monitor" online content for rumors. Examples of passive rumor tracking systems are:

- Social Media monitoring teams that scan PoCs' most used Facebook groups and pages and scrutinize the posts and comments for rumors and misinformation;
- Analysis of the questions and comments made to UNHCR official pages and accounts, or UNHCR feedback systems like call-centers

> **✎ Tips**
>
> Try not to use questionnaires or polls to collect rumors online but rely on the local network as your ears on the ground. When collecting rumors, it is important to manage expectations. You will never have all the answers, so it is essential to let the community know this. Make clear that while you will share their information with relevant organizations, this will not guarantee their needs are met. But staff working on rumor tracking can at least read up on the facts and services the community might be interested in. The team collecting rumors should be abreast of answers to Frequently Asked Questions and have relevant referral contacts to hand.

Active collection mobilizes the community to collect rumors. Examples of this are:

- Crowd sourcing projects where you can, for example, create a Facebook group or WhatsApp channel entirely dedicated to identifying and debunking rumors. On these pages, Persons of Concern are invited to say what they have heard in the community;
- Closed networks, where you rely on trusted people on the ground to collect rumors for you via their own online channels.

Factsheet

See Factsheet 4 to learn more about different types of misinformation.

Step 5: Verify and share

Rumors are often half truths or the product of misunderstanding or lack of information. Check the facts behind them with reliable sources. These could be written sources, e.g. laws, rules, policies, reports, or factsheets; or they could be people with first-hand experience and/or in-depth knowledge of the subject. Choose sources the local population will believe. For example, if the rumor stems from mistrust towards the government, verify with a non-government source.

When you have verified the information, report back to the community, using open or closed channels, as appropriate. Since both government and humanitarian organizations often use impenetrable jargon, 'translate' the information accurately into something applicable and to the point. Then it can be shared through your various channels in comprehensible styles and formats.

Where possible, use multimedia to create content that will attract an audience. Your community networks will soon show if your message has got through or is causing further confusion.

To speed up the process create a Rumors Library, where you can collect responses to recurring rumors for re-use. But avoid making this an automated system, with copy and paste responses. Rather, for the same rumor, have a range of responses in different formats, customized for specific audiences. Make sure your team knows how to use and adjust them, depending on the audience they are targeting.

Step 6: Learn and Adapt

Understanding what set off a rumor gives you a chance to address the root causes. Something your organization has done or failed to explain might need to be addressed to kill the rumor. Or if a rumor has been spread by a group of influential individuals, working with them might solve the problem. Rumors illustrate the stresses and anxieties of people in a community. Reflecting on what the rumor tells you about them deepens your understanding of the issues they face.

Whatever analysis you do, make sure to share it with your monitors on the ground, the rest of the humanitarian community and local media and authorities, if relevant and as appropriate. Rumors travel fast and can affect humanitarian operations and communities locally, nationally and regionally.

Tip

Do not disregard rumors that sound "absurd". Every rumor has its reason and sometimes this is not obvious. Rely on colleagues, partners and PoCs to understand where a rumor may have come from.

Example of rumor analysis that can support learning and adaptation in your operations:
• Understand the connection between rumors and specific UNHCR policies/systems/activities being implemented on the ground;
• Understand the impact of UNHCR information and communication campaigns, and adjust accordingly;
• Use rumors as an early warning system to support the protection response, e.g, as a way to monitor tension or animosity towards a certain issue or group of people;
• Analyze rumors over time to measure UNHCR's success in informing PoC.

💬 Messaging Apps

Rumors can spread rapidly on Messaging Apps, in part because information is usually shared in closed groups based on peer trust. This can pose a challenge to protection personnel.[104]

But monitoring rumors and misinformation via Messaging Apps can help UNHCR and protection teams to direct their efforts more effectively. It helps in predicting trends, such as the forced displacement of large numbers of people in response to rumors or threats, and increases understanding of popular perceptions of protection activities.

A specific challenge when it comes to rumors transmitted via Messaging Apps is that you need a network with enough capillaries to detect them and report back via proxies or trusted sources inside the network.

You can see an example of such a project here.

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104 See more about closed networks using mobile phones on Anahi Ayala, The Dichotomy of Technology in Conflict: Beauty and the Beast – in Vazquez Llorente R. and Wall, I. (eds.) (2014) Communications Technology and Humanitarian Delivery: Challenges and Opportunities for Security Risk Management. European Inter-agency Security Forum (EISF).

Resourcing

Rumor tracking mechanisms are labor intensive and require medium to high investment in personnel, skills development and technical support.

The following recommendations will help you think through resource requirements:

- **Rely as much as possible on local networks:**
  UNHCR Community-Based Protection relies on different groups, including women, youth, older persons and people with disabilities. Often, you can find these groups (or networks) on digital tools. (If you have done a good Digital Ecosystem Assessment (see Chapter 1), you should have that information). When it comes to debunking rumors, trust is fundamental, so turn to reliable and well used networks. Avoid creating something from scratch, especially if you do not know the level of trust towards UNHCR;

- **Integrate your Social Media channel into referral pathways:**
  As you would do offline -- in phone calls, walk-ins or outreach interactions – so with Social Media, refer and respond to rumors in the right way. Working out this modus operandi will help you determine roles, responsibilities and resources. This includes mapping and setting responsibilities at an inter-agency level. Bear in mind that coordinating across multiple communication channels can be a full time role. SOPs should make clear how information will flow, when and how, and who will respond;

- **Keep up to speed and be present:**
  Rumors travel fast on Social Media. When considering resourcing, work out how you will maintain maximum time limits for replies (Recommendation: under four hours). Be ready to quash rumors with a high potential to endanger people. Your system may need to have preferential referral lines;

- **Only create a rumor tracking mechanism if you have resources for translation:**
  Either within the same channel, or across multiple channels, the community may use various languages, e.g. when external links are shared. Translation resources must be available to ensure information is understood by all community members and colleagues. Translation may be done 'in house' among colleagues and/or volunteers (as per pre-agreed roles), or you may need to hire an external service;

- **Connect your online/offline interfaces:**
  Not every community member has access to connectivity to take part in conversations via Social Media. Aside from considering how resources can help bridge this digital divide, try to ensure your offline outreach and information systems are connected to the rumor tracking. You want to know that given the same rumors, UNHCR's response will be uniform across sectors and staff.
  This ensures rumors are addressed offline, even if they were identified online;

🗒 Factsheets

See Chapter 8 to learn more about connecting offline and online activities. See also Factsheet 7 to see how Social Media activities can support Protection Outcomes.

- **Invest in producing engaging and relevant multimedia content:**
  If information has descended into rumor, the chances are the information was not very clear in the first place. Digital channels allow for conversations with a range of formats: audio, video, images, icons and emojis. To grab and hold public interest, consider how you will resource video, audio and photographic content. Content can be generated in-house or externally, depending on your budget. Where possible, co-create with communities. For example, you could have videos featuring young people or photographs from around the community;

- **Build capacity and learn from others:**
  Managing and analyzing rumors and misinformation on Social Media is not an easy task, or one that UNHCR is used to. So we suggest UNHCR offices that want to create rumor tracking mechanisms collaborate with partners, other UN agencies or local NGOs to learn from each other. Develop on-going training for those managing the system, including training on how rumors relate to the "DO NO HARM" principle.

© UNHCR/Felipe Irnaldo

✓ Do's

DO ensure the people you hire have more than just technical skills. They need to understand the value of rumor tracking and the importance of putting the community at the centre of all we do.

DO ensure the safety of people sharing information with you and your staff, paying attention to online privacy and data security.

DO develop a simple referral pathway for internal complaints and ensure all staff know how to use it and are comfortable with it. Include an external referral pathway too. The protection team will be able to guide you on external referral.

DO collect as little personal data as possible. Only take names and contact details if essential.

DO use different channels to collect information. This ensures all the various groups in the community can communicate with you.

DO build partnerships with organizations that have 'boots on the ground', when UNHCR's operational presence is low. Probably their staff and/or volunteers are already talking to the community.

✕ Don'ts

DO NOT assume that everyone in the team will define rumors in the same way or perceive their potential to cause harm in the same way. Train your staff often.

DO NOT try to debunk all rumors you receive but rather create a risk matrix to determine which rumors could have negative repercussions on the ground.

DO NOT try to rumor track alone. Even if UNHCR manages the project entirely, these efforts require a wide network across civil society and online communities.

DO NOT think of rumors only as deliberate misinformation. The reason people believe them usually has nothing to do with us but rather with their situation and emotions.

DO NOT spend too long assessing the motivations behind a rumor. Simply try to pin down what started it, so you can decide the best way to respond.

DO NOT assume people will necessarily want to talk to you. They may be reluctant to repeat rumors to outsiders. Build your ways of listening to rumors around existing, trusted relationships.

Check List

Have you conducted a Situation Analysis to understand misinformation and disinformation in your context? Have you developed and discussed your findings with the community? (see Chapter 1)

☐

Have you identified and discussed with stakeholders existing local resources or actors working on online misinformation?

☐

Have you worked with stakeholders on a strategy to counter misinformation? What are its methods and resources?

☐

If you are building a rumor tracking system yourself, did you involve a diverse group from the affected community in its design?

☐

Do you have the minimum required staff for the intended activities? Have they undergone Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and gender equality training?

☐

When it comes to debunking rumors, are you or your partners always in a position to use the language of the affected community?

☐

Have you set up systems to check in regularly with the community so you can adjust the rumor tracking system over time?

☐

Do you have a network of trusted people who can share verified information in the community, both online and offline?

☐

Have you integrated your Social Media channels into referral pathways to better manage rumors?

☐

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Case Studies

Internews, Managing Misinformation in a Humanitarian Context - Internews Rumour Tracking Methodology Part I-2 - Case Studies, 2020

Mercy Corps, The Weaponization of Social Media, How Social Media can spark violence and what can be done about it, 2019

Internews, Nepal Open Mic, Tracking Rumors in Post-Earthquake Nepal, 2016

USAID, Tracking Rumors to Contain Disease: The Case of DeySay in Liberia's Ebola Outbreak, 2016

Sommariva, Silvia & Vamos et all., Spreading the (Fake) News: Exploring Health Messages on Social Media, American Journal of Health Education. 49, 2018

Chapter 7

Feedback and Response Mechanisms

Introduction

This chapter examines how to use Social Media to solicit, gather and respond to feedback about UNHCR and/or partners' services. It points out the different factors to consider if you want to achieve a sustainable workflow that addresses feedback received via Social Media in a timely and effective manner.

Resources

UNHCR, UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP, 2020
This Guidance details the objectives of each AAP area of focus, as outlined in UNHCR's AAP Framework (core actions 2-5 of the 2018 UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity). It outlines key elements of each area and the expectations for compliance. It is accompanied by recommended steps and tools that can be adapted to the context.

UNHCR Compact Guide for Senior Managers: AAP, 2020
This defines the objectives of the four components in UNHCR's AAP framework, outlining the key elements of each. It includes recommended steps and tools to implement the concepts, based on country examples, both in refugee and IDP situations.

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Toolkit, Tool 15: Feedback Starter Kit, 2017
This document offers a step-by-step guide and templates for choosing, planning, setting up and managing a feedback and complaints system.

ALNAP, Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback in Humanitarian Contexts, 2014
This guide is for people designing/implementing feedback mechanisms in a humanitarian program, in particular when such mechanisms operate at the level of the individual program/project to provide useful information and deal with a broad caseload.

Considerations of age, gender and diversity guide all aspects of UNHCR's work, in line with the imperatives of UNHCR's AAP commitments and its efforts to promote human rights and gender equality and empower PoCs. As we hold ourselves accountable to People of ConcernPersons of Concern, the views, needs and priorities of women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds inform our interventions, advocacy and programs

Under the UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 2018, UNHCR is committed to receive formal and informal feedback systematically from Persons of Concern and to respond, ensuring appropriate corrective measures are taken. Feedback and response mechanisms allow protection personnel to hear directly from PoCs about the protection risks and issues they face, and to learn about the effectiveness of our protection, assistance and solutions programs. The term 'feedback' includes comments, suggestions and complaints

Inter-Agency Collaboration on Setting up Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms

In emergencies, Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms (CBCM) are often created with the aim of facilitating SEA reporting and referral of allegations and helping SEA survivors to access assistance and services. High confidentiality is essential when dealing with individual SEA complaints, so we advise against using Social Media to handle them.

CBCMs are jointly developed with a Community of Concern, preferably in an inter-agency framework, and make use of the community's resources and structures. So CBCMs should be culture and gender-sensitive and remove barriers that hinder members from reporting SEA incidents. Properly implemented and well-functioning CBCMs help raise awareness of SEA among PoCs and humanitarian staff. They enable an efficient response to SEA in emergency situations. See the IASC guidance on PSEA here.

Source: UNHCR

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1. Types of Feedback and Response Mechanisms

> **⚠ Important**
>
> Remember that Feedback and Response Mechanisms (F&R) on Social Media, as on any other channel, will never reach all of your targeted population. As suggested in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, identify those who do not have access to the chosen SM platform/mechanism for whatever reason, and make sure you provide alternatives, including offline and face-to-face options.

Characteristics of Feedback and Response (F&R) mechanisms, including on Social Media:

- Multiple two-way communication channels tailored to the different needs, preferences and capacities of Persons of Concern. With an AGD approach you will tailor your approach, for example, to children, older people, persons with low digital literacy levels, and people with disabilities. Such channels can take the form of face-to-face communications, help desks, call centers, dedicated email accounts, two-way SMS systems and Social Media. The channels may allow for anonymous feedback;
- Confidentiality safeguards to ensure matters such as sexual exploitation and abuse are handled sensitively and individuals feel and are safe when sharing information;
- SOPs setting out timelines, methods, tools and roles and responsibilities for gathering, storing, acknowledging, assessing, referring and responding to feedback, and analyzing and reporting on aggregate feedback data.

The design of F&R mechanisms on Social Media depends on the operational context and the input from communities.

Social Media presents an opportunity to maintain a continuous Feedback and Response mechanism that is not affected by the physical location of people. You do not need long-term resources to support it on the ground, although it must be adequately maintained online. SM should complement and link with offline F&R mechanisms, ensuring the whole is inclusive and does not create new protection risks through limited access. Offline F&R mechanisms are often best for handling sensitive individual complaints.

> **❗ Important**
>
> Remember that when individual complaint management entails the processing of personal data, the Data Controller must ensure these mechanisms comply with the UNHCR Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern.

Technically you can set up F&R mechanisms in the following ways:

- **Multi-channel mechanisms:** These are normally the most sustainable and can be set up using multiple offline and online channels. Systems like this can have, for example, a Facebook page to collect F&R; community structures on the ground to share the responses and collect further feedback; a call center that uses the Facebook data to elaborate on responses; and FAQ to help the operators;
- **Single-channel mechanisms:** F&R can also be done with one channel, for example by solely using WhatsApp or relying on just a call center. These mechanisms can be set up quicker than multi-channel systems but they are more limited in their reach, i.e., they will exclude PoCs who cannot access the channel. Stand-alone mechanisms still need to be integrated into the other F&R systems the organization uses;
- **Addition to existing mechanisms:** You can set up and manage an F&R mechanism by adding it to an existing mechanism. For example, if you use a Signal channel to discuss GBV issues with youth and girls (in general, not specific incidents or cases), you can let PoCs use the same channel to tell you about services that are not working or fail to meet their expectations.

> **❗ Important**
>
> Feedback and complaint mechanisms can be managed entirely by UNHCR, or they can be inter-agency, partner-led or community-led. See Chapter 3, Section 3 for options on roles and management.

2. How to Create F&R Mechanisms Using Social Media

An F&R mechanism is effective if it collects, acknowledges, compiles, analyses and responds to feedback (including deciding not to take action). Reporting back to communities on the feedback closes the feedback loop.[105] A good F&R mechanism, whether online or offline, includes different channels and is integrated with similar systems in the country. And of course it is inclusive, allowing as many Persons of Concern as possible to use it, across the spectrum of relevant AGD groups.

Resource

UNHCR, UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP, 2020 has a detailed chapter about Feedback and Response Mechanisms (see Pages 24-37)

Step 1: Situation and Context Analysis

As explained in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, you have to understand both the protection operational context and the Social Media context to see if it is appropriate and feasible to use SM. F&R mechanisms must be designed based on the findings of the social media situation analysis and the risk assessment, which have already assessed the context and risks. In order not to duplicate efforts, use the Situation Analysis to map the different population groups and their existing methods of communicating feedback and receiving responses, including channels set up by other agencies, partners, and local authorities.

Resources

See Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 for step-by-step guidance on how to conduct a Situation Analysis and Risk Assessment for Social Media projects/activities.

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105 UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 2018

📶 Step 2: Design and Community Consultations

Use your Situation Analysis and Risk Assessment to define the purpose, expected uses and needs of the F&R mechanism, along with any steps or mechanisms to prevent and mitigate risk. All-round consultation is essential at this stage to work out what barriers are preventing feedback being given, listened to and acted on, both online and offline. What additional groups of the population could a Social Media F&R mechanism reach? Chosen SM channels should be fully integrated into the overall F&R mechanisms in the operation (likely including other channels). At this stage you should also identify which communication tools and channels are most appropriate for F&R and make clear how you will coordinate with partners and existing F&R mechanisms.

> **❗ Important**
>
> An F&R mechanism is only as effective as the communication campaign that goes with it. Spend what it takes for advertising and design ads to attract the target audience. See Chapter 10 for more information on this topic.

📶 Step 3: Select and Set Up

Decide which mechanisms are to be used and what their scope will be (what they can and cannot do). Be clear about which population groups will have access. Crucial to making an F&R mechanism work is ensuring at the design stage that you know the workflows, processes and capacities you will need in order to deal with incoming and outgoing information.

Plan ahead for the staff, methods and tools you need to collect and record feedback data and to sort and verify it.

Make sure your F&R mechanism gives reliable information to PoCs about the processes, systems and duties/responsibilities of partners and other agencies.

Remember to monitor your F&R mechanism and adjust it as needed. Even if your design was good, you will always have to adjust processes and workflows once you set up the system, based on lessons learned, feedback received, and changes in the operational context (including e.g., a decision to establish an inter-agency mechanism). At the set-up stage, think about the processes and tools for feedback collection (formal and informal) and processing, storage, analysis and reporting.

Resources

See Chapter 3 for more information on how to choose a Social Media platform, manage it and handle content.

Ensure the F&R mechanism is designed to collect the data you need to be able to analyse the feedback in a disaggregated way. For example, if you want to generate findings about the feedback received from certain age groups and from persons with a certain level of education, both age and education data must be collected via the F&R mechanism. If this data is not collected via the F&R mechanism, it will not be possible to do AGD-sensitive analysis of the feedback or to do AGD-sensitive programme adaptations.

You should always reevaluate your Social Media F&R mechanism through individual dialogues, Participatory Assessment and community dialogues (on and offline). Your aim should be to strengthen the way this data is linked to decision-making processes, response design and course correction. Develop a 'feedback culture' in your operation and harness opportunities to learn about and improve the F&R mechanism.

Important

Often in humanitarian operations, multiple and varied F&R mechanisms cover the same population. Try to minimize the time and effort it takes communities and PoCs to be able to find the right channel. Join existing collective or inter-agency systems, or establish clear coordination between systems if they are not compatible. In all cases, F&R mechanisms should be easy for PoCs to find, access and use. See here for more information on inter-agency F&R systems.

Step 4: Establish Internal Support Structures

You have to be clear and consistent about the purpose and scope of the F&R mechanism and how you expect it to be used and supported. What is the mechanism for? How is each type of feedback dealt with, and in what timeframe? You may also want to compare processes or expectations for Social Media vs offline channels, depending on how often they are reviewed and what capacity they have to respond.

Ensure you have the resources and channels to create a confidential space for reporting and monitor closely how people use it, as this will give you an idea of its limitations.[106]
Who you hire and train to manage the system is also important. The more nationalities, cultures, genders and ages you have to collect and respond to feedback, the more inclusive your system will be. The F&R staff should have regular updates and training on PSEA and how to handle private conversations, sensitive issues and negative comments, as well as on data protection and information security on Social Media.

Step 5: Establish SOPs/Guidelines

Establish Standard Operating Procedures for the feedback and response system, detailing who does what, when and how. This also means deciding how sensitive information (e.g. about sexual abuse or fraud) will be addressed. Agree on roles and responsibilities and pin down commitments, both internally, inter-agency and with partners. When setting up the F&R system, allow time to assess how your procedures and workflows are working and adjust them if necessary.

Step 6: Raise Awareness

Take every opportunity to inform people about what they can expect from the F&R process and what limitations there might be. Proactively explain changes you have made at the program/ organizational level and say why certain actions are not always possible.

Ask local media, e.g. radio stations, to inform communities about your Social Media F&R and how it works.[107] You should publicize the feedback system internally and externally, and let people know about the system and their right to give feedback or complain. Make sure you use diversified methods to inform communities about the systems, using their local languages and different formats, such as videos, radio programs, face to face outreach, etc.

Step 7: Consistently Receive, Acknowledge and Respond to Feedback

As with rumors, the best way to collect and categorize feedback is to create a logbook that can also be used to record feedback and track responses and referrals. To help them analyze the content, most organizations define "categories" of feedback, dividing them into comments, suggestions and complaints. When categorizing feedback, we have to make sure that we do not inadvertently dismiss something important to a Person of Concern just because it does not fit into our standard categories. Whatever your typology, add an 'Other' category to avoid forcing feedback into an ill-fitting category or not addressing it at all.

The feedback can be analyzed by relevant AGD characteristics, as well as by type and topics and

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sub-topics. All categories should be adjusted periodically to make sure they reflect the content received. Changes on the ground will often show up in changes to the feedback topics.

Feedback can be analyzed in two different ways, in terms of how we responded to it and how we can use it:
- At the individual response level, we can analyze feedback to highlight its subject matter, the response it received and the satisfaction (or otherwise) of the person who submitted it;
- At the organizational level, we can look at the variation of feedback on the same topic over time; how feedback has been incorporated into program design and actions; and the use of the F&R mechanism by diverse groups of PoCs.

Resource

See Chapter 9 on how to use Social Media Analytics to understand the impact of your SM presence.

To close the feedback loop, make sure you involve colleagues across the organization in the work of F&R. Even if you manage the project directly, coordinate with the rest of the operation, the wider humanitarian community (and beyond, as appropriate, e.g., development and peace actors), and other F&R mechanisms. Responding to feedback is not optional; it's a must. And it should be done on a tailored and individual basis, using the same channel the person used, unless that is unsafe. If you can't reply directly, work with partners and communities to improve your capacity to respond and engage.

When communicating decisions back to individuals, collect and record feedback on their experience of the F&R system itself, and satisfaction with the response. This will help you to adjust the F&R mechanism, if necessary, and perhaps review the decision taken (as relevant).

Resources

See Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 for more on how to respond to feedback, and how to handle negative comments and sensitive conversations on Social Media.

Regardless of the type of management structure and system you use for F&R, you must have a dedicated mechanism to coordinate response to feedback across the organization, with partners and sometimes with government agencies (as appropriate). In some cases, UNHCR offices have created inter-agency or intra-agency coordination committees with stakeholders that meet regularly to discuss, revise and assign feedback to partners or UNHCR staff. The same committee should also make recommendations on how to incorporate feedback into operations. Whatever your system, always report feedback, with relevant disaggregation, to all decision-makers (including UNHCR senior management, partners and government stakeholders as relevant), ensuring they receive what they need for their purposes. They should not be informed of individual cases with personal details but rather receive aggregated data about the types of feedback received and how UNHCR and partners are responding to it

Step 8: Monitor, Evaluate, Learn and Adapt

Once your system is up and running, you will have to monitor its appropriateness and effectiveness and report on your findings to ensure they inform program design. Make sure you have systems in place to monitor and track operational changes implemented as a result of feedback. Do you have a way to evaluate your internal and referral workflows to improve the efficiency of both programming and the F&R mechanism?

In emergencies, situations can change rapidly and dramatically. For a mechanism to stay relevant, it must be able to adapt to change. This is why it is important to keep monitoring the functioning of the F&R mechanism and watching its impact on operations and the relationship between UNHCR/partners and PoCs on the ground.

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> ## ❗ Important
>
> Sometimes humanitarian organizations use perception surveys to provide a snapshot of F&R mechanisms and Accountability to Affected People (AAP) in a given country. They can be one-off or routine, depending on methodology, but rarely are they done in real time. Such surveys tend to quantify responses by applying a Likert (1-5) scale, or restrict answers to multiple choices. While an operation may know a response was 'negative', they may not know why, for whom, or how to remedy it. Many perception surveys lack a link to a specific service or intervention. So, their findings can remain abstract and not very applicable for practitioners.[108]
>
> Regularly ask who is NOT using the mechanism and seek to understand why.

UNHCR's CBP approach to F&R determines gaps and challenges in protection programming by identifying local capacities and developing solutions jointly with communities.

> ## ❗ Important
>
> A feedback flow chart is a pictorial representation of how information from Persons of Concern moves through the operation. It captures the different channels that communities use to communicate with UNHCR and partners, and what happens to communication when it reaches the organization. Studying your operation's feedback flowchart can highlight areas that may need to be addressed to ensure closed feedback loops and inform the drawing up of SOPs for the F&R system. See more about Feedback Flowcharts on page 29 of UNHCR, UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP, 2020.

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108 UNHCR Innovation Service, Closing the Feedback Loop, the Quest for a Quick Fix, 2018

3. Integrating Social Media F&R Mechanisms into Protection Operations

F&R mechanisms need to be embedded into operations at all levels. Social Media F&R mechanisms are no different. The main contrast with offline is that the online one often needs to respond faster, and mechanisms may be designed to complement offline ones to reach different groups of the population. Most of the suggestions below apply both online and offline.

Social Media F&R allows for feedback from persons of concern to be received and answered systematically, and for corrective action to be taken if necessary. When considering what actions to take, it is critical to engage field-based colleagues and partners – to ensure the feedback loop can be closed.

Factors you can identify at the design stage may help you integrate your Social Media F&R mechanism into the protection response:

- Set up and test in advance systems, SOPs and workflows that will send feedback received to the right person. Then a response or action can be prompt. If these mechanisms are inter-agency, be sure to have the proper data sharing agreements[109] so data and information can be shared responsibly, safely and purposefully, with the necessary safeguards in place and in full compliance with the UNHCR Data Protection Policy.
- Involve the community offline as much as you do online. Especially if you are targeting a specific group of the population, make sure they can get the same F&R service offline as they do online. All PoCs, regardless of their AGD profiles, should have access to effective F&R;
- Coordinate both internally and externally and gather all relevant stakeholders round the same table to discuss feedback response, strategic communication, advocacy and outreach. Often these activities influence PoCs' understanding and use of F&R;
- Involve local media and organizations to advertise and explain the project (if they were not already involved at the design stage). F&R will only be effective if you inform people about it and make sure they know how the mechanism works.

Factsheets

See Fachsheet 7 for a checklist to make sure your F&R mechanism is Community-Based and integrated.

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109 Keep in mind that you will need a data sharing agreement, even if you are not sharing or collecting any personal data.

Resourcing

Managing F&R mechanisms in large operations is not easy. It is important to avoid raising expectations that a lack of resources will disappoint.

In particular, protection personnel intending to create Social Media F&R mechanisms should:

- **Involve the community and partners from the outset and plan for a handover:** Consider the sustainability of activities and find effective response strategies that can be handled by the community. Remember that language and cultural references count when communicating with PoCs, so make sure your staff and resources are adequate. Avoid jargon.
- **Invest in coordination of F&R and communication initiatives:** This can be done within organizations and at the inter-agency level. Coordination reduces the number of entry points for PoCs, minimizes the risk of circulating contradictory or duplicative information, encourages joint messaging and allows organizations to share and co-resource information channels;

> **! Important**
>
> Coordination mechanisms for communication often already exist. Working groups for Communicating with Communities (CwC) or Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) may have been activated. If so, use your F&R mechanisms as an accountability tool, working with other actors to address needs and solve problems collectively.

- **Define roles, responsibilities and procedures at the design stage:** To manage and respond to community feedback effectively, it is essential to define and agree on roles and responsibilities, internally and at the inter-agency level, as relevant. Responders should draft SOPs that set out agreed commitments, timeframes for follow-up, and collective and individual roles;
- **Avoid duplicating efforts:** To make communication initiatives sustainable, build on staff capacities and work with services that are already active. See what they are doing (via the Social Media Situation Analysis, see Chapter 1), and build on that. Identify which community members, partners and staff you can work with. For example, if people are regularly using certain pages or accounts to find information about their country, or visit pages for music and entertainment, or look to self-help groups for medical advice, you can connect your Social Media presence to these groups;
- **Identify the resources you need to ensure you can implement, receive and react:** Depending on your protection planning, and the arrangements you make, operations will need budgets, staff and skills, tools and possibly additional technology. In your planning, it is vital to include resources for 'listening and responding' so the operation can receive and respond to feedback from communities.

✓ Do's

✗ Don'ts

DO provide private areas and/or channels for F&R and reiterate the confidentiality of the information being shared.
Be mindful of the privacy and data protection challenges of Social Media and ensure private and secure channels are available outside SM.

DO NOT pour all your effort into a single channel. The more channels you connect with, the lower the risk of loss of engagement with a community if access to one fails. Multiple channels will probably be necessary to provide all PoCs with an accessible channel to give feedback.

DO engage with existing F&R systems.

DO NOT wait until the community is frustrated by lack of response to their feedback. Rather, make sure the F&R mechanism is designed to perform its key function of 'closing the loop' in a timely manner.

DO adapt your F&R mechanism to the changing dynamics of the operational context. If necessary, go back to the drawing board and be sure to communicate changes promptly.

DO NOT disregard the influence of the gender or age of staff simply because they are invisible to users. Ensure staff know how to refer any sensitive questions that come in or ask for help if they are uncertain how to handle something.

DO present your aggregated feedback data using data visualization with relevant AGD disaggregation. Show trends to support specific aims, such as course corrections in protection programming.

**DO NOT** use one type and format of reporting for everyone. Remember that decisions need to be made from feedback received, so always customize reporting to fit the purposes of the identified end-users and the needs of the decision-making process.

DO use PoCs' preferred and trusted channels to close the feedback loop.

DO NOT look only at individual feedback but rather analyze comments over time to identify possible patterns.

Check List

Have you involved communities and partners to discuss the objectives of the F&R mechanism and define how it will work? ☐

Have you discussed with PoCs and partners the type of F&R mechanism you want to set up, and its management structure? ☐

Have you used information from the Social Media Situation Analysis and/or Participatory Assessments to guide your decisions about the initial design of the F&R mechanism? ☐

Have you ensured availability of private, confidential and secure channels (outside Social Media) for individual feedback? ☐

Have you looked at existing F&R mechanisms to see where they might complement yours? ☐

Have you worked out and tested SOPs, guidelines and referral systems for feedback management? ☐

Have you identified and sourced the technical skills needed to manage the feedback component of the Social Media account? ☐

Have you identified the decision-makers who will act on the feedback, and tailored the analysis and the reporting type and format to their needs? ☐

Have you identified the processes and tools to monitor feedback individually, over time and across different channels? ☐

Have you linked your Social Media F&R mechanism to offline F&R mechanisms, e.g. call centers, suggestion boxes and community structures? Remember that various channels must be accessible to all PoCs and suitable for both sensitive and non-sensitive feedback. ☐

Have you created internal coordination mechanisms to manage and respond to feedback? ☐

Have you allocated human and financial resources to ensure that feedback from Persons of Concern is systematically collected, acknowledged, assessed, referred and answered in a timely and confidential manner? ☐

Have you joined existing coordination mechanisms to collaborate with partners in feedback referral and response? ☐
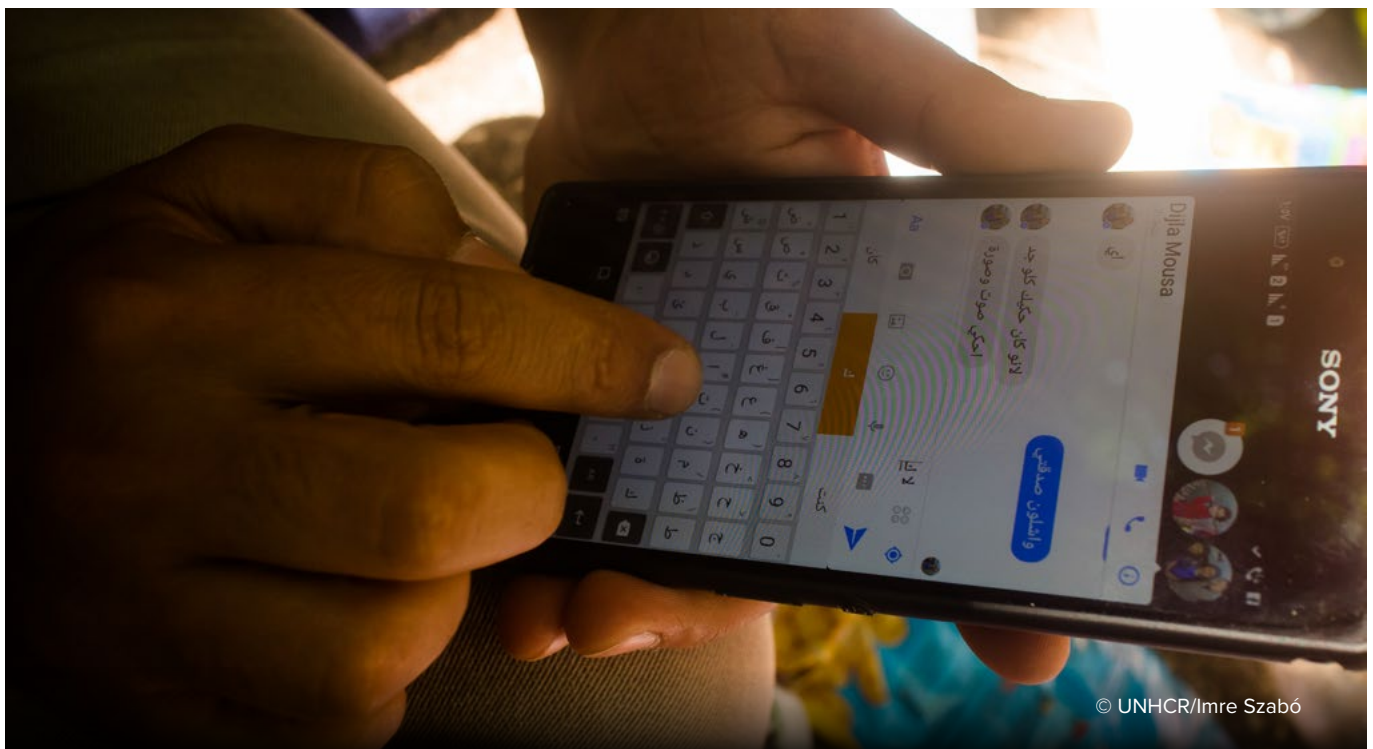
© UNHCR/Imre Szabó

Case Studies

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- UNHCR, Feedback Mechanisms in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2017

- UNHCR Innovation Service, Using data to make your humanitarian organization more client-focused, 2018

- Save the Children et al., Inter-agency Study on Child-Friendly Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms within NGO Programs, 2015

Chapter 8

Connecting Social Media to Offline Protection Activities

Introduction

This chapter relates to the links between Social Media activities and UNHCR actions to deliver protection and assistance. It describes how to integrate protection information collected on Social Media with existing UNHCR data management systems, referral mechanisms and Case Management.

1. Online and Offline

Under the UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 2018, women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds need to be able to engage meaningfully and be consulted on protection, assistance and solutions. This means that in their operations, UNHCR and partners choose different kinds of participation, making them accessible to all groups in a community. At-risk groups, such as minorities, people with disabilities and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as under-represented groups such as adolescents, youth and older people, must all be included.

On Social Media, giving a voice to all members of a community with a single tool is almost impossible. Many people worldwide still do not have access to stable and continuous internet or mobile devices. And each sector of the population will likely have different preferred Social Media platforms, if any.

To identify and incorporate the priorities and capacities of Persons of Concern into the development of programs, all the while minimizing the risk of excluding them on Social Media, we need to consider two factors:

1. Social Media content and activities need to be well targeted. The situation analysis in Chapter 1 is fundamental for this process;
2. Online protection activities have most impact when they are integrated and interconnected with those offline.

This means that on Social Media, participatory processes will be essential to establish community ownership of programs and allow monitoring and course corrections by the communities themselves. This also highlights the need to connect protection concerns, AGD analysis, digital access and users' mapping in order to design communication strategies that target all sectors of the population.

To be accountable to affected people, UNHCR and partners need to strengthen the links between online and offline communities. These tips may help you make that integration:

- **Use your community mapping:** The Situation Analysis will be the basis of your integration system. There you will find sectors of the population who are both online and offline, and communities that are either one or the other;

- **Focus on protection concerns:** When you or your partners decide (with stakeholders) the protection issues to be addressed with Social Media, and evaluate the associated risks, you can find yourself in one of two scenarios:
  - The protection concern is particular to the online/Social Media world (e.g. scams aimed at selling fake relocation papers to refugees);
  - The protection concern is also found in the offline world (e.g. xenophobic attacks against certain Persons of Concern).

  Both these scenarios require UNHCR and partners to work offline and online simultaneously. Even if you are targeting a protection issue only found on Social Media, you need to be sure that people not yet using SM, or who may hear what can be found on SM, have a basic knowledge of the issue and how to protect themselves and warn others;

- **Think complementary:** If the issue crops up both online and offline, start with what you already have but don't simply repeat online what you are doing offline. If offline activities are being implemented on the ground, for example training for community leaders on peaceful coexistence, you can create complementary activities online. In this example, you might: create community pages to connect host communities and PoCs; engage Social Media influencers locally to discuss the subject on their channels and invite youth into the conversation; conduct an online advocacy campaign using videos and online challenges;

- **Assess, monitor, test and reiterate:** Finding correlations between online and offline information can be difficult. UNHCR and partners cannot assume that information is flowing to offline communities via Social Media. Make sure you have ways to monitor offline effects of online activities and vice-versa. For example, you could add a line to a clinic form, asking people where they heard of a service, to see if they found the information online. Social Media Analytics will also help to understand who is using the information, and how.

2. Referrals

Given the inherent risk of Social Media, it is strongly advised never to use these channels as a means for individual case referrals or case management, or for referrals involving personal data. However, PoCs will often share important and sensitive information with UNHCR via Social Media, both publicly and privately. So it is essential for UNHCR to have effective confidential referral systems for Social Media content, involving internal and external partners who bridge gaps in protection and service delivery.

If you think Social Media will be used for individual case referrals, it is imperative the data controller conducts a DPIA on the SM platform as a tool for case referrals, and all principles in the UNHCR Data Protection Policy (DPP) must be complied with. Referrals may come internally, externally or directly from persons of poncern (self-referral). The most responsive procedures normally consider referrals from all three sources.

While internal referrals occur through UNHCR staff, external referrals usually come from Implementing Partners, other NGOs involved in protection, and government agencies. External referrals help us to identify problems and expand access to protection services.

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! Important

Informed Consentis the voluntary agreement of an individual who has the capacity to give consent, and who exercises free and informed choice. In all circumstances, including on Social Media, consent should be sought from PoCs prior to referring them to another agency or unit. To be legally valid, consent to handle personal data must be informed, specific and freely given.110 Consent is the most frequently used and preferred legal basis for personal data processing. However, given the nature of humanitarian emergencies PoCs, organizations may not be in a position to rely on consent for personal data processing.

According to the UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR, 2015, when when consent cannot be validly obtained, personal data may still be processed if it is in the vital interest of the data subject, i.e. when the subject's life, security, integrity, health or dignity may depend on it.111 Whether consent is appropriate depends on a thorough understanding of the situation. Fairness and respect for the rights of individuals require UNHCR to obtain consent whenever the situation allows an informed individual to exercise his/her choice freely.

For Informed Consent, protection officers managing the Social Media engagement must ensure that PoCs fully understand the services and options available (i.e. the Case Management process). They must understand the benefits and risks of receiving services; what information will be collected and by whom, how it will be used and with whom it will be shared; and the limits of confidentiality. UNHCR staff should communicate in a friendly and comprehensible manner and encourage PoCs to ask questions that will help them make decisions regarding their situation.

See more on Informed Consent in the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, December 2019.

In case you are directly approached on Social Media by an individual requesting to be referred:

	Weigh the risks of engaging and not engaging with this person on Social Media, and seek other secure means of contact if possible and necessary;
	If the decision is to engage, protection staff should introduce themselves and explain their role. Staff should aim to move the conversation to a UNHCR secure channel as soon as feasible;

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110   You will find the full definition in the DPP 1.4 and DPG 3.2

111   "Best Interest" refers to the principle set out in Article 3 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and can be used to justify the processing of children's personal data. For UNHCR, this would require the proper conduct of a Best Interest Procedure (see below: seeking consent/assent from children).

Consent (oral or written) should be sought before making the referral;

To obtain consent, share the identity of the staff collecting the information and their role. Give your contact information and details of the service options available and the provider(s) to whom the person will be referred. Let him or her know the next steps. Explain confidentiality and how their data will be stored, used and shared (if this is the case) by the organizations handling it. Advise the person that at any time they can withdraw their consent and cancel the referral, or request that their personal information be corrected, and/or destroyed. Information about these processes and rights should be communicated clearly, using non-technical language;

If consent is given - and before any information is collected - technical and/or organizational measures for data protection and data security must be in place to ensure the safe storage and transfer/sharing of information from UNHCR to the service provider. Refer to the UNHCR Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Guidance for more information on the processing and transfer of personal data of PoCs;

If consent is given, only basic information should be noted down to help the individual access the services he/she requests. Work on a strict "need to know" basis, i.e. only take information that is relevant to providing the specific service requested. In view of the data security concern surrounding Social Media, protection personnel should minimize the collection of personal data to what is strictly necessary for referral. If sensitive personal data is needed, staff should redirect the person to a safer channel, if possible;

Only ask and share the minimum information necessary for the referral e.g first name, contact number and best time to call. And only do it once you have established a secure communication channel;

Depending on the request of the person being referred:

1　Provide the individual with the name and contact details of the service provider (which is not considered a referral) or;
2　Make contact for the individual with the relevant agency/organization through a secure official referral channel.

Tell the person that if they face any problem accessing the service(s) they can come back to referring agency staff or volunteers. If the individual says they are unable to access a specific service, try to provide information on alternative nearby services;

If an individual does not consent, or does not ask you to contact the service providers, refrain from collecting personal data and limit your help to giving information on where to find services and sharing any hotline numbers.

If referrals are done on Social Media, bear in mind the following:

Most Social Media platforms allow you to talk to a user via private conversation (Facebook Messenger, Direct Messages on Twitter, etc.). These "private" channels are not encrypted and should never be used to exchange sensitive information. But you can use them to direct a conversation to a secure channel, e.g. by giving a phone number or email address. Types of data that are 'sensitive' in your operational context should be defined as part of the Social Media presence/engagement strategy, bearing in mind UNHCR's Data Protection Policy;

If you see a lot of people using your Social Media channel to give you private information or information you will refer to NGOs or partners anyway, consider creating a FAQ entry or pinning a post to your Social Media page to direct them to the right channels in the first place;

If your Social Media channel is embedded in an inter-agency mechanism or managed jointly with partners, designate a focal point in each partner organization to have an admin account. In this way you will minimize the copying and sharing of information about referrals on multiple channels;

Make clear your referral pathways on Social Media, even if the conversation is continued offline. People want to know the process, so if you refer them to other pages, accounts or systems, make sure they understand why.

Referrals to Confidential Channels

Very often, and despite clear advice to the contrary, people use Social Media to disclose sensitive information about themselves or others. In Chapter 4, we touched on what to do if someone posts private information publicly on your Social Media channel. To summarize: contact the person immediately, delete the information and engage him or her on a secure channel to discuss their situation.

For private and/or sensitive information, consider the following factors that may differ from offline channels:

1. Protection officers should be available on speed dial for cases that may need an immediate response. You may be in a situation where a Person of Concern can only use Social Media, perhaps for a limited time. In such cases, fast and tested internal referral mechanisms are essential;

2. If someone reports SEA, refer it immediately to the relevant body within the organization. Provide the complainant with a secure channel to communicate;

3. Make sure all admins know the different referral pathways and can explain them clearly in the relevant languages;

4. Always have a pinned post or FAQ with full information on how to make different requests. Who should you contact, when and how?

Interacting with minors online

The explosion of information online has created unprecedented opportunities for children and young people to communicate. But internet access and mobile technology also pose threats to children's safety, both online and offline.

When it comes to protecting children online, we must strike a balance between their rights to information and free expression and their right to safety. Measures to protect them should be targeted and not unduly restrictive, either for the child or other users. In some cases, organizations and companies are starting to promote digital citizenship for children and developing products and platforms that facilitate their positive use of ICTs.

UNICEF developed five key areas for protecting and promoting children's rights online:
1. Integrating child rights considerations into all appropriate corporate policies and management processes;
2. Developing standard processes to handle child sexual abuse material;
3. Creating a safer and age-appropriate online environment;
4. Educating children, parents and teachers about children's safety and their responsible use of ICTs;
5. Promoting digital technology to increase civic engagement.

For more on this topic see UNICEF & GovLab, Responsible Data for Children (RD4C), 2019, and UNICEF, Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 2015.

3 Connecting Social Media to Case Management

As we have said, PoCs should be warned against sharing personal information on Social Media but if they have done so, damage can be limited and they can be directed to more secure channels.

Information shared via Social Media is hard to verify and can be easy to dismiss as 'fake' or 'uncorroborated'. Nonetheless, if a PoC does reach out to UNHCR via Social Media with information pertinent to their case, it is important this information is appropriately recorded (just like information shared with UNHCR in the offline world).

UNHCR's "Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem" (PRIMES) includes UNHCR's digital tools for registration, identity management and case management of refugees (such as proGres v4, RApp and BIMS). Information shared by PoCs via Social Media can be – where appropriate – recorded; for example under the 'add communication' function on ProGres.

Information recorded in the personal/case files of individuals can help to track rights violations, including hate speech, gender-based violence, bullying, intimidation and scams. This will help UNHCR and partners provide the appropriate/tailored protection response.

We can close the loop between UNHCR's Social Media presence and Case Management by making sure PoCs know the proper channels to use to transmit personal information and discuss their cases. We can also work with communities to raise awareness on the possible risks of sharing certain types of information on Social media.

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> **!** **Important**
>
> In exceptional circumstances, UNHCR may still need to process the personal data of PoCs in urgent need, despite the lack of secure channels . The privacy and data protection risks need to be balanced against other possibly imminent risks. In such cases, UNHCR staff should tell PoCs the purpose of processing personal data and the accompanying risks of the communications means being used. Restrict collection and processing of personal data to what is absolutely necessary and balance it against the risk of the means used, and bring the issue to the attention of the Data Controller and Data Protection Focal Point. Remember: while processing personal data may only be carried out on a legitimate basis and in a fair and transparent way, including by explicit and informed consent, UNHCR can still process it on one of the following grounds:
>
> (i) With the consent of the data subject;
>
> (ii) In the vital or best interests of the data subject;
>
> (iii) To enable UNHCR to carry out its mandate;
>
> (iv) Beyond UNHCR's mandate, to ensure the safety and security of Persons of Concern or other individuals
>
> See more on: [UNHCR, Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of People of Concern to UNHCR, 2018](#)

Digital Rights Violations

All digital rights (access to information, freedom of expression, freedom of association etc.), are essentially human rights in the internet era. They are based on and protected under international human rights instruments, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), as well as regional instruments such as the African Union's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Criminals are increasingly using Social Media to target vulnerable people with false promises. Examples include [the use of Social Media to trick refugees into paying for relocation](#); [Social Media being used by traffickers to influence migrants' decisions](#) and [Social Media used to identify, track or even meet minors in person](#).

This problem is growing in humanitarian situations. Our response focuses on prevention, using offline mass communication, face-to-face communication and consistent messaging on UNHCR channels.

Issues of criminality can be addressed directly on Social Media, which can be used to identify, track and monitor specific protection risks. Below are some examples of how Social Media can tackle possible violations of PoCs' human rights online:

- Most platforms have a function that allows you to report a page or account. If you see any message online that you suspect may be targeting PoCs for scams, you can immediately report it to the platform. Usually, such behaviors are investigated and sanctioned by the platforms themselves as a breach of community guidelines or user agreements;

- Always engage with people who may be sharing false information or scams and explain to them the correct procedures/systems;

- If you believe a Social Media account or page is being used to harm certain people or groups, you should immediately discuss it with protection colleagues and, if necessary, report it to local authorities and the Social Media platform. This is why it is important to ensure individual online risks are documented. Risk in the offline world would be documented and used in Case Management, and the same applies online;

- Discuss with your team what measures you can take to respond to specific posts or address specific risks;

- If you have the resources to sustain it, you may offer PoCs using your site the option to use your expertise to verify information. For example, you can set up a rumor tracking system for online information;[112]

- If you see a lot of users asking similar questions or being confused about the same issue, do not dismiss it. Find out if someone is misleading them. Always ask users where and from whom they have taken "wrong or false" information;[113]

- Make sure you have structures and monitoring systems for your Social Media interactions with PoCs to prevent any misrepresentation or abuse. In rare cases, staff/partners/volunteers may misrepresent themselves under UNHCR's brand, or abuse power using Social Media interactions on behalf of UNHCR to take advantage of a vulnerable person. To prevent this, make sure all staff are trained periodically on the UNHCR Code of Conduct, as well as relevant policies and guidelines.

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112 See more on Rumour Tracking in Chapter 6.

113 See UNHCR, 10 Tips to Minimize the Sharing of Misinformation via Social Media Channels, Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) -COVID 19, March 2020

Resourcing

Connecting offline and online protection activities can maximize the use of resources and the outcomes of both activities. Even in contexts where the offline and online population differs considerably, there are often connections between the two spheres. Understanding these links will help you create online/offline strategies that reinforce each other.

The following suggestions may help you to budget for integrated systems:

- Involve IMOs or IM focal points from the outset: As data specialists, they will be able to help design, implement and review the data elements of your Social Media project. They can also assist in the management of sensitive data (in line with responsible data approaches) and in complying with the Data Protection Policy;
- Map your offline and online activities, and find ways in which the same resource can support both – for example, by engaging outreach volunteers on and offline;
- Invest in educating and promoting safety online;
- Make sure that a rise in PoCs requesting individual case support via Social Media is not linked to a lack of other channels, or people experiencing difficulties with them. If that is the case, you may have to invest in those offline approaches rather than augmenting your Social Media presence;
- From the outset, create strong connections between your on-the-ground protection staff and partners and your Social Media management, so they know what information is flowing and how. This will save you from spending extra time and resources creating these ties when you need them.

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

DO make sure all staff knows the referral pathways and how to use them.

DO NOT delete messages containing private or sensitive information without contacting the sender and explaining why you removed them.

DO train staff and create monitoring systems for PSEA and child protection, as Social Media is often used by minors.

DO NOT assume that just because your page is not intended for minors, they will not access it. The usual safeguarding systems you use offline need to be set up online too.

DO connect with other UNHCR offices in your region or beyond, who may have similar Social Media projects or developed integrated data analysis platforms, before you think about creating your own tool.

DO NOT create a bespoke platform. This should be a last resort, only if there is no alternative, and done with HQ to ensure inter-operability with existing systems.

DO connect Social Media projects with offline advocacy, outreach and feedback mechanisms as much as possible.

DO NOT assume that Social Media automatically means collecting personal data. In fact you can use SM for protection without collecting any personal data.

DO create workflows and SOPS to connect IMOs with protection staff, so they know what information to exchange, in what situations and how.

DO NOT create organizational silos in your Social Media activities and don't restrict SM data management to IMOs.

Check List

Have you involved a multi-functional team in discussing internal and external referrals for Social Media content? ☐

Do you have SOPs for responding to children or minors online? ☐

Have you prepared child-friendly guidelines, spelling out specific risks or scams to which children are vulnerable? ☐

Have you prepared a clear and translated set of guidelines for PoCs using Social Media to make them aware of risks and scams? ☐

Do you have specific SOPs for Social Media content and/or appropriate systems to handle sensitive communications and referrals? ☐

Have you ensured that your Social Media project is connected to UNHCR's protection response, including Referrals and Case Management? ☐

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Case Studies

On-Ramps, Intersections and Exit Routes: A Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking, 2018

UNHCR Innovation, Teaching a 'Robot' to Detect Xenophobia Online, 2017

UNHCR Innovation, Chatbots in humanitarian settings: Revolutionary, a fad or something in-between? 2018

UNHCR Jordan, History of the Helpline, 2017

USAID et all, Bridging Real-Time Data and Adaptive Management: Ten Lessons for Policy Makers and Practitioners

Social Media and Forced Displacement: Big Data Analytics & Machine-Learning, White Paper, 2017

Chapter 9

Social Media Analytics

Introduction

This chapter looks at how to use Social Media Analytics to inform campaigns, strategies and engagement assessments. It helps you use insights from Social Media data to get a better understanding of how to engage communities and adjust your programmes.

In this Guide, the term "Social Media Analytics" refers to the systematic computational analysis of data or statistics from a Social Media account/channel. Typical SM analytics include for example number of individual engagements (retweets, likes, comments) and audience demographics (by age, gender, location).

Social Media is by definition a real-time means of communication. Regardless of whether you post something today and I read it tomorrow, people using Social Media expect an almost instant response.[114] For this reason, it is important that the admins of Social Media are able to respond immediately and adapt their channels in near real-time. Analytics are one of the best ways to keep track of fast-moving, real-time conversations, providing data and analysis that can inform engagement strategies, community management and management of reputational risk.

Social Media Analytics for Protection can be used for various purposes:

1. Situation Analysis

Often Social Media platforms have embedded tools that perform some basic analysis of the data on your channel. Depending on the platform, additional analytical capacity can be built into the channel or it may be possible to extract data with an Application Program Interface (API). You should always have a way to track and measure your Social Media presence, no matter what you are using it for.

Data held by Social Media companies can help UNHCR and partners better understand key issues related to a situation, such as: the demographics of certain groups, their geographic distribution, and displacement trends; public sentiment; and who UNHCR is reaching on Social Media (which helps us assess if we are reaching the right/targeted audience). Such data contributes to improved situational awareness and response, and we can also use it to conduct our Social Media Situation Analysis (see Chapter 1). Remember that situation analysis does not involve or require collecting personal data.

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114   According to a study by The Social Habit, 42% of consumers expect a response on Social Media within 60 minutes. On Facebook, 85% think up to six hours is reasonable while on Twitter, 64% want an answer in an hour. Source here

Example

[This paper,](#) published in 2017, is the result of an experimental project conducted by the UN Global Pulse and UNHCR's Innovation Service. It used data from Twitter to monitor protection issues and the safe access to asylum for refugees and migrants in Europe. The project looked at interactions among refugees, between refugees and host communities, and between refugees and service providers along the way to Europe. Find more information [here](#).

2. Knowledge creation and Transfer

A wide range of datasets generated by Social Media analytics can be combined and analyzed to generate new insights that can be used by decision makers. This is particularly true when Social Media data is combined with other sources of data to generate a more complete picture of the issue at hand.

Example

In 2014, the United Nations Millennium Campaign and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council partnered to deliver a comprehensive advocacy and communication drive on sanitation. Their efforts gelled with the UN Deputy Secretary General's Call to Action on Sanitation to increase the number of people with access to good sanitation. Global Pulse analyzed Social Media to provide an insight on the baseline of public engagement and explore ways of monitoring a new sanitation campaign. By showing how the volume and content of public discourse about sanitation changed over time, the study made it possible to monitor the reach and effectiveness of the communications campaign. Find more about this project [here](#).

3. Service Design and Delivery

Social Media analytics can open up previously inaccessible data sets, improving decisions about response strategies and helping to guide service delivery based on reliable evidence.

Example

Between May and August 2016, when Zika was a big issue in Brazil, Facebook and the data consultancy firm ActionSprout conducted surveys of local Facebook users and analyzed what they were saying to better understand the public conversation about the virus. The two organizations [anaysed the data](#) to find out who was posting information about Zika and what they were sharing to determine their concerns. This allowed UNICEF Brazil to tailor their Social Media ads and provide better services to communities to help them with Zika prevention.

4. Prediction and Forecasting

New predictive models made possible by access to Social Media datasets can help UNHCR conduct forecast analysis to anticipate problems or avert crises.

Example

In 2017, University of Warwick researchers looked at photographs and key words posted online to see if they could signal weather risks developing in specific locations. For example, posts about water levels rising could alert the authorities to a potential flood. The researchers tracked photos and videos with tags (such as river, water or landscape) on Flickr between 2004 and 2014. The findings showed that tracking certain words used on Social Media around the time of an extreme weather event allows information to be collated to predict which areas will be affected. You can work out how serious the threat to life and infrastructure will be and create an early warning system of unprecedented accuracy.

5. Impact Assessments and Evaluation

Access to Social Media datasets can help UNHCR monitor and evaluate the impact of government refugee policies and UNHCR responses. Thus, the design of programs and services can be constantly improved.[115]

Example

In 2014, to coincide with the United Nations Climate Summit, UN Global Pulse developed a real-time Social Media monitoring system to explore online discourse about climate change. The monitor was accessible to the public and daily analyzed tweets in English, Spanish and French to show the volume and content of comments about climate change in relation to the economy, energy, etc. By comparing interest levels between topics and regions, and monitoring the success of climate-related communications and events, the monitor could measure awareness, further public engagement and support climate policy-making. Access the Twitter monitor here.

While some of the examples above are Big Data[116] projects, the analysis of Social Media data does not necessarily require Big Data. Inevitably, when digital platforms are used, data is generated both by UNHCR and end-users and shared among various parties, including the platform provider. The data can be directly generated by the interactions on Social Media and/or come in the form of metadata i.e. data about the data generated.

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115   See Chapter 11 for more information on how to use Social Media for M&E of UNHCR Social Media activities.
116   The UN defines Big Data as the large amount of passively collected data deriving from everyday interactions with digital products or services, including mobile phones, credit cards and Social Media.

With data analytics, certain data protection concerns need to be considered:

- Big Data and data analytics may not involve the processing of personal data or personally identifying data. But with enough information, it may be possible to generate a profile of a user type and his/her habits;
- On Social Media platforms, consent, when sought, is often not fully informed or specific, and data submitted for one purpose may be reused out of context for unrelated purposes. So we have to be very careful about what Consent means and make sure it covers the range of the data we are managing and processing.

While using information from Social Media can support our protection objectives, it is important to know the risks of doing so. People can be harmed as well as helped by data (and decisions based on data), so we must ensure the necessary measures are taken to prevent and/or mitigate these risks. In the case of personal data, this can be done, for example, by conducting a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)[117] (see Chapter 2).

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It is also important to remember that data from Social Media platforms and Messaging Apps are typically not representative of a population beyond the users of the particular channel. Lack of coverage, under-coverage, self-selection and differing response rates all introduce biases when we estimate the extent of interest from Social Media data. Such biases should be taken into account before undertaking data analysis. Check sample distributions in demographic variables against population distributions from censuses, registration data and other representative data sets. Statistical techniques such as multi-level regression with post-stratification (MRP), can be used to correct differences between the Social Media sample and population distributions.

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117   See the template in the Guide for the UNHCR Data Protection Policy and Chapter 5 of the ICRC Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action (2nd edition/2020).

1. Social Media Analytics: Key Tips

TIP 1: Become familiar with the insights options of your chosen Social Media platform.

Almost all of them have one. If yours doesn't, there may be an option to download and analyze your data independently. Make sure you involve Information Management and PI/Communications colleagues before you start your Social Media analysis, so they can support you in the design and planning of the analysis process and its outputs.

TIP 2: Understand the operational context and protection challenges and be clear why you are doing the analysis.

The context and purpose will help you decide what types of data — and at what unit of measurement, granularity and frequency — will help you meet your objectives. What other types of information can be paired with the real-time Social Media data for a more comprehensive analysis and/or to triangulate the findings?

© UNHCR/Genesis Andreira Lemus Guacaroin

TIP 3: Use the metrics below to determine ways of improving your intervention, be it content, response time, etc.

What is your target audience looking for? How do they engage with and respond to your online activities? Metrics include:
- Age, gender and diversity-disaggregated data about your users;
- Their overall level of engagement on your channel;
- Topics people respond to/topics that attract less attention;
- Most popular format of your posts;
- Time of the day when your audience is most online.

At this stage, identify performance indicators for the objectives of your Social Media presence (e.g. number of likes and shares) and connect them with protection outcome indicators (e.g. better access for PoCs to UNHCR's and partners' services). The indicators should be measured at the lowest geographic level at which the program operates (or that is needed for the analysis). This step is crucial to connecting your Social Media presence to your overall protection goals.

Resources

See Chapter 11 for more on Social Media and Monitoring and Evaluation practices.

TIP 4: Identify the mechanisms, systems, processes and/or decision points into which Social Media data can be integrated.

You can only do this if you have mapped what information is available and being used to design programs/ activities, draw conclusions and make decisions. Bear in mind the limitations of Social Media as tools for reaching certain groups and make sure the technology and age/gender gap is accounted for.

Real-Time Data for Adaptive Management
Real-time data systems employ digital technologies (computers, tablets, mobile phones, sensors, etc.) and specialized software to accelerate the collection, sharing, management, analysis and reporting of data, with the aim of facilitating quick and effective decision-making. Real Time Data for Adaptive Management helps integrate monitoring, evaluating and learning with program implementation, a necessary condition for an adaptive approach. It is critical for organizations like UNHCR to make sense of data during implementation, test the hypothesis at the heart of a program and formulate a new one, if necessary.
Source: USAID

TIP 5: When trying to meet the needs of different stakeholders, be aware of trade-offs between speed and data quality.

There are clear differences between the characteristics of Social Media data and the requirements of quality data. To be of value, the raw data generated by Social Media often needs to be sorted, cleaned and triangulated. This can slow down the flow of data and lessen its potential value. Weigh the advantage of speed against other factors. Adaptive management in complex situations often requires interpreting a variety of data to spot emerging trends. Instantaneous Social Media data may not be the best source of information to support evidence-based decision-making. Each program must identify the decision points and the speed of feedback that is necessary to inform the decisions. Having right-time, quality data may be more important than having real-time data.

TIP 6: Be agile if you want to meet the needs of adaptive programming.

Because Social Media platforms are built on regular, fast cycles of action, analysis and adaptation, any system they rely on that will also need to be agile and capable of improvement over time. Protection programs using Social Media data must undergo course corrections to stay aligned with the human, social and technological processes that happen during an intervention. Make sure this data is combined with other evidence that is used to inform the adaptation of programs.

TIP 7: Review, adjust, test, iterate.

Study your metrics consistently and regularly. Some of the analytics systems embedded in your Social Media platform will let you create targeted reports, where you can choose which metrics to look at and send regular reports to other people. Some will allow you to download your data and analyze it independently. No matter how you do it, make sure you do a periodical review of the data, with frequency determined by the purpose of the analysis and the needs of the end-users. The review should involve all the admins of your Social Media channels as well as the project manager, protection staff and all those who create content. The review may lead to adjustments to your Social Media strategy. It is also a way to track progress and look at the effect of specific UNHCR and partner activities.

2. Tools for Data Analytics

> **! Important**
>
> When deciding about technology and what tools to use, reach out to colleagues in UNHCR's:
> - Division of External Relations, Digital Engagement Service
> - DIMA Units in Regional Bureaux
> - UNHCR's Innovation Service

The table below shows **Data Analytics** tools embedded into the most commonly used Social Media platforms:

Social Media Channel	Data Analytics Dashboard/Tool
Facebook	
Facebook Page Insights	Facebook Page Insights give you detailed analytics for your Facebook page, so you can learn how people interact with your content, note what works and improve your results.
Facebook Audience Insights	Facebook Audience Insights help you understand your Facebook audience, so you can better target ads and create more relevant content.
Twitter	
Account Home	Account Home is the Twitter report card, with high-level statistics tracked month to month. It's also a gallery of the account's greatest hits. It has a spotlight of the top-performing tweets and reveals the influencers in your network.
Tweet Activity Dashboard	The Tweet Activity Dashboard is where you can find metrics for every single tweet. The dashboard tracks how many times Twitter users have seen, liked, retweeted and replied to each tweet.

Instagram	
Instagram Insights	Instagram Insights tell you about followers and the people interacting with an account on Instagram. They can provide data about the audience, like gender, age range and location. The system also allows you to see which posts and stories the audience engages with most. Insights and metrics about an Instagram account include paid activity as well. Reach, accounts reached, impressions and impressions day by day reflect both paid and free activity.
You Tube	
The Watch Time Report	The Watch Time Report compiles data from your YouTube channel, the individual videos on the channel and any engagement from YouTube's mobile apps.
Revenue Report	The Revenue Report shows how much money an account is making using ads within a given period, and where the revenue is coming from.
Interaction metrics	The most important Interaction Metrics are subscribers, likes/dislikes, comments and shares; in other words, all the ways viewers can tell you directly how they feel about your videos. Studying this data will show you the best way to reach and cultivate relationships with your subscribers.

You can also use a third-party tool to analyze your social media data and get insights on your Social Media presence.[118] The table below shows some third-party Data Analytics tools commonly used to analyze SM platforms:

Platform	Description
Brandwatch	Brandwatch Consumer Research delivers instant insights about an account,services, users and trends by providing live and historical data from across the web. Brandwatch is a paid system that: • Collects and analyzes billions of conversations; • Measures the impact of your marketing, content and social activity; • Uncovers insights to improve your strategy.
Meltwater	Meltwater helps you sift through thousands of news sources using sophisticated search monitors. A paid system, it finds everything relevant to a customer's operation, both locally and globally. Its media monitoring function offers the world's largest source base, including 300,000 news sources from 205 countries in 87 languages. Meltwater also offers dashboards that can be customized to analyze metrics by date, geography, language and opinion/sentiment.
Pulsar	Pulsar aims to help clients find the story in the data. Their social listening and audience intelligence platform bring all digital audiences together in one place. Their analytics suite also allows you to gather data-driven Social Media insights by leveraging the power of AI & data visualization, using their media analytics, trends and social listening tools.
Sysomos	Sysomos is a paid system. It allows for: • Social Listening. The social research and monitoring engine has unlimited data and no cap on the number of queries on over 200 billion social conversations; • Social Monitoring. You can engage, publish and monitor news and Social Media from one platform; • Social Influencing. Search 900 million profiles and 60k categories to find and manage influencers across the world; • Reports & Services. You can optimize social strategy with access to a wealth of social reports or build what you need with customized reports and social API access.

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118   The UNHCR Global Social Media Team and the UNHCR GCS Analytics Team have paid contracts with some of these companies and can advise country offices wanting to invest in them.

Third-party tools allow you to achieve a higher degree of customization and work on larger datasets. But if you want to use them, there are some considerations:

- **Language:** Not all third-party tools can detect and translate scripts. This may be a problem if the community uses Arabic, Chinese, Russian or any other language with a non-Latin script;
- **Data Protection and Security:** When assessing the risks associated with these tools, always engage with ICT colleagues on data security and with Data Protection colleagues on data protection;119
- **Resources:** Third-party tools are normally more sophisticated and complex than embedded tools. This means staff will have to be trained and it could take weeks before you are able to take advantage of all the functions of the dashboard;
- **Customization:** Being able to customize third-party tools is what makes them appealing. But users sometimes choose tools that are too complicated for their needs. Your analysis should be guided by the needs of the intended decision-makers to ensure it is not more complex or in-depth than what is necessary to meet those needs.

There is a third way to gather and analyze data and that is via an Application Programming Interface (API). Social media services like Twitter, Facebook and Google have all opened up their products to outside developers via APIs. These enable outside parties to build a product or app off an existing service. TweetDeck for Twitter, MySpace apps, Facebook Connect and WhatsApp's Turn.io are just some examples of social APIs. With an API, you can use an existing app, or build one, to take the data stream from a Social Media channel and reorganize or interact with it on a different dashboard. UNHCR colleagues can reach out to the Digital Engagement Service in the Division of External Relations for more support.

Example

In "Using Social Media for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in the MENA Region: World Food Program Case Study" DFID looked at how news about WFP's reduction/cancellation of food deliveries to Syrian refugees spread across Twitter in 2014/15. Researchers from the University of Cardiff loaded 24,000 tweets into Cosmos, a free-for-research data analysis software developed by the university. They then ran network and frequency analyses over the sample and tried to classify topics, sentiment and locations or origin.

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119   Remember that a DPIA is required when the collection and processing or transfer of personal data is likely to be large, repeated or structural (i.e. where data is shared with an Implementing Partner or third party over a certain period of time). See more on the UNHCR Policy on Data Protection.

3. Tools for Resource Maximization

Managing Social Media is time consuming because of the sheer volume of conversations/interactions and the need to respond quickly. For an organization like UNHCR and large operations, staff may not be able to deal meaningfully with the flood of requests.

To manage FAQs or handle a large volume of questions, you may think about using a third-party tool that automates some actions staff would otherwise perform. Below we list some options. Consult regional and HQ colleagues before deciding to pursue any of them:

Tool	Description
AI	Artificial Intelligence is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translation between languages.
Chat Bots	A chat bot is an artificial intelligence (AI) program that simulates interactive human conversation by using pre-calculated user phrases and auditory or text-based signals. Chat bots are used frequently on social networking hubs and for instant messaging (IM). They are also often included in operating systems as intelligent virtual assistants. A chat bot is also known as an Artificial Conversational Entity (ACE), a chat robot, a talk bot and a chatter bot or chatterbox.
IVR	Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is a technology that allows a computer to interact with humans through the use of voice and Dual Tone Multi Frequencing (DTMF tones) put in via a keypad. In telecommunications, IVR allows callers to interact with an organization's host system via a telephone keypad or by speech recognition, after which services can be inquired about through IVR dialogue. IVR systems can respond with pre-recorded or dynamically generated audio to direct users on how to proceed.

If you are thinking about using any of these tools, bear in mind the following:

- AI or use of algorithms may have serious data protection and privacy implications. A DPIA[120] is required before implementing the system;

- Automated response can be very frustrating for the person at the receiving end, especially if they are in distress or not familiar with the language used. The best option is always to pair an automated system with a human who can respond appropriately;

- Not all situations are right for these tools. It is important you design and test these systems with Persons of Concern and involve them in subsequent monitoring and evaluation;

- Some AI technologies are in their infancy. While they may be promising, are they proportional to your needs? And have they undergone a security audit and a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?
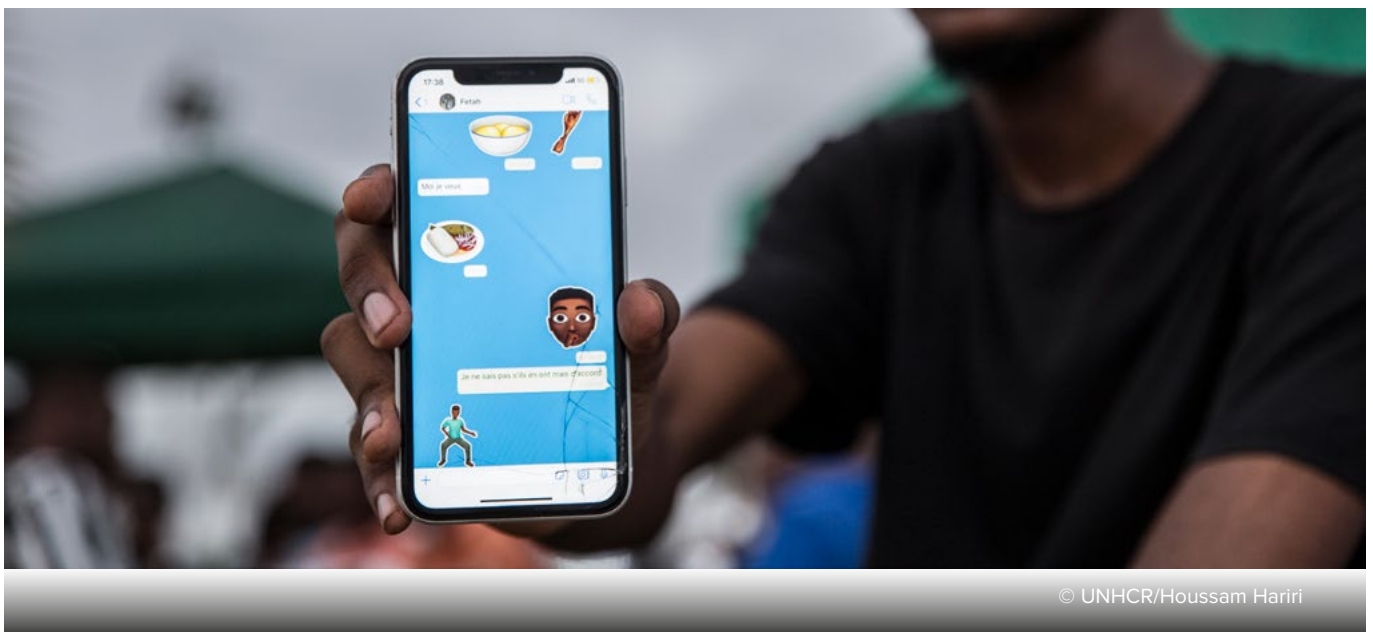
© UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

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120 New technologies or systems, tools, modules, or data processing platforms, including inter-operable or shared databases, which are perceived or expected to carry inherent privacy risks should, as a matter of principle, undergo a DPIA. This includes for example the collection of biometric data, cloud storage, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, drones, automated decision-making systems, two-way communications using social media, smartphones or bulk SMS. See more on the UNHCR, Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR, 2015.

Resourcing

While Social Media Analytics may not fall directly under the duties of Information Management Officers (IMOs), it is always a good idea to involve them at the outset, both in developing the SOPs for your Social Media strategy/project generally and, more specifically, in defining your data analytics strategy for Social Media. IMOs will be able to advise on data flows, roles and responsibilities, and relevant data processes, methods and tools. They can also ensure that any relevant links are made between the Social Media project and the operation's Information and data management strategy. Also keep in mind that collecting personal data outside the anonymized analytics provided by each SM platform may put at risk the protection of PoCs and should therefore be carefully evaluated with the Data Controller.
Information Management (IM) is a specialist function in UNHCR but other staff also have expertise in generating, analyzing and using data.[121]

Consider these factors when resourcing for Data Analysis in your Social Media project:

- **Involve M&E experts:** Monitoring and Evaluation experts can help you understand how to link protection performance and outcome indicators to Social Media metrics during the analysis. They will be pivotal in linking your Social Media data analysis to data collected from offline activities. In other words, they will help you bridge your online and offline protection strategies;
- **Don't reinvent the wheel:** The type of technology or tool you choose for data analysis will determine the resources you will have to put into the system. Look first at data analytics tools embedded into your Social Media account. If they don't do the job, contact IM and M&E colleagues to explore how best to analyse the data for your purpose;
- **Think about your purpose to ensure tailored and effective data analysis and use:** Sometimes when a large amount of data is available, we want to use it all to create ever more sophisticated data analysis products. Make sure you focus on the data you need to make certain decisions (i.e. the purpose and objectives of the project identified at the outset) and let this guide your analysis. Present the findings of the analysis in products that are fit-for-purpose to those objectives and meet the needs of the end-users.

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121 For more information on UNHCR's vision for data, see the UNHCR Data Transformation Strategy 2020-2025

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

DO always identify what data you have access to and understand how it will enhance your programs, rather than duplicating data collection.

DO NOT use metrics that count interactions. Quality matters more than quantity. As one of the metrics, you can use the number of "likes" received but they should not be the sole indication of the quality of your engagement.[122]

DO set up a periodical review of the findings of your Social Media data analysis that involves all staff and partners in the project (Protection, Program, IM, M&E, and others).

DO NOT use metrics without placing them in the local context. Look at offline events or changes in policies that could affect the interactions people have on your Social Media channel.

DO institute flexible systems that allow you to adapt your activities quickly based on the findings of your analysis.

DO NOT think of analysis as a stand-alone activity or of Social Media Analytics as a reporting mechanism. Data analysis is just one of a chain of steps to meet the information needs related to your objective. You need a decision-making process that leads to actions.

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122 See more on measuring community engagement in Chapter 10

Checklist

Have you identified your purpose and the end-users of the analysis of Social Media data, and adjusted your approach accordingly? ☐

Have you familiarized yourself with the data analytics tools that are embedded in your Social Media channel? ☐

Have you decided which data you need to bring together for analysis in order to support your objective(s)? ☐

Did you involve all relevant colleagues from the outset, including Protection, Program, and IM, as well as partners and end-users of the findings? ☐

Do you have a clear process and timeline for analyzing the data and presenting the findings? ☐

Have you made sure that you are only collecting the data you need, and never sharing personal information in the context of data analysis? ☐

Have you involved other colleagues (i.e., in DER in HQ or DIMA in your regional bureau) that can help you understand how you can use data analytics from your Social Media projects in a safe and responsible way? ☐

Case Studies

UN Global Pulse and UNHCR Innovation Service, Social Media and Forced Displacement: Big Data Analytics & Machine-Learning, White Paper, 2017

UN Global Pulse, Analyzing Social Media Conversations to Understand Public Perceptions of Sanitation, 2014

DFID, Using Social Media for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in the MENA Region: World Food Program Case Study, 2016
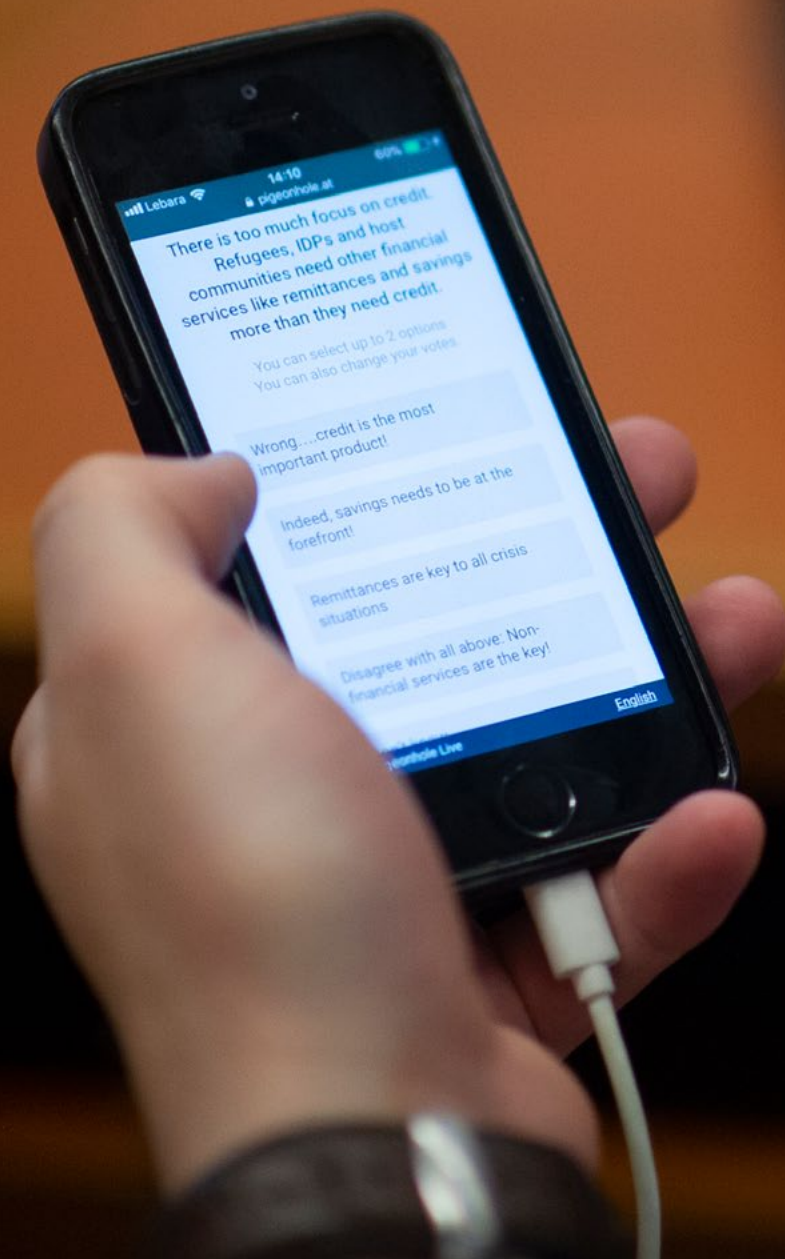
Chapter 10

Ads, Outreach and Advocacy

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how to use Social Media for outreach and advocacy, and how to use online ads. It also describes how to use Social Media to engage communities on issues related to human rights and forcibly displaced populations.

1. Online ads

You can reach persons of concern with targeted advertising that they will see on their Social Media feeds. But pushing paid content in front of random users doesn't achieve much. Audience demographics should guide your ad spend, content selection and publication frequency. Having AGD-disaggregated information about the audience is a good start.

When done properly, Social Media advertising can help you create an audience critical mass of PoCs and engage them in the way they prefer, long-term. You can use Social Media ads to :

- Create large enough audience at the beginning of your project;
- Target a specific subset of the population, based on AGD characteristics, location, interests, etc., with tailored information;
- Invite to action, both online and offline.

✏️ Tip

If you want to implement the ideas in this chapter, re-read section 1 of Chapter 9.

Important considerations when creating ads for specific groups include:
1. Negative perceptions PoCs might have when being 'targeted' with 'refugee-focused' paid content. Feeling 'tracked' or 'watched' may erode trust and heighten anxiety among the very people we hope to reach with protection information and services.
2. Risks of drawing attention to services for PoCs (i.e. through geographic targeting) which could heighten negative perceptions in host populations, who don't see 'targeted services/support' for themselves.
3. Considerations of peaceful coexistence, especially if you are trying to reach people who may be discriminated against or seen as draining resources from the local population.

If you are interested in creating ads, there are a few basic steps to follow. You can reach out to colleagues in Public Information for further information

Step 1: Know your campaign objectives and how to measure them

Set clear goals for your ads. Over time, they may be adjusted. Clearly formulating your goals will allow you to determine if your investment has paid off. Normally people use ads to:

- **Increase Traffic:** If you want your account to be seen by as many PoCs as possible, it helps to increase traffic. This is especially true when you are promoting a new account, service or group;
- **Increase Visibility:** Higher awareness of protection services means PoCs are better able to protect themselves. Recognition of UNHCR's role and trust in the organization will also grow. Being visible increases your reach. Visibility is not the same as self-promotion;
- **Increase Engagement:** Ads can help you understand if users like your posts and what type of posts raise engagement. Video views, shares, comments, likes and retweets can help you understand what content works best;
- **Increase Conversions:** See the specific actions people are taking on your website, such as subscribing to a newsletter or making a donation. To track conversions, you need to install a certain piece of code across your pages, for example Facebook pixel.

Step 2: Select your target audience

Select your target audience, based on the objective identified at step 1. Targeting an audience for Social Media ads is not easy. You need to find the middle ground with the population and take time to create and refine a receptive audience.

Most platforms allow you to create targeted ads based on the some or all of the following:
- Age and gender;
- Language;
- Location;
- Interests;
- Behaviors.

Selecting an audience is a compromise between the "perfect audience" you have in mind and the people actually using the platform. Building the audience is a matter of trial and error. The best way to start an ad campaign is to select a narrow audience, and then expand it when you get the first results. Using a community-based approach will help you pick the right audience for your intended goal.

When segmenting a campaign to reach different audiences,[123] make sure ads are not overlapping, to avoid double delivery and ad fatigue. Some platforms, such as Facebook and Google, have automated audience expansion settings that allow algorithms to reach more people than those defined in the detailed targeting. (This usually doesn't apply to location and age/gender targeting options.) To be on the safe side, switch off this setting and target only your intended audiences.

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123 See more about audience segmentation here.

Step 3: Blend in with organic content

Once you have built an audience, you will need to decide what content to advertise. Social Media offers a range of options for paid advertising.

Not every type of ad will work. This is why you need to know the various ad formats so you can blend with the content on the Social Media Platform. For example, Facebook currently offers six variations of video ads that brands can use on the platform. These include link posts, video ads and lead generation form ads, where you ask your audience to fill out a form. You may also opt to boost a particular post. Weigh the pros and cons of each format before you post.

One of the best techniques when creating paid content is to blend seamlessly into feeds, walls and timelines. Your ads don't always have to make people take immediate action. Instead, you can use them to blend in and make them feel like natural content to users. People generally know when they see an ad, which is why you want to avoid seeming too spammy or promotional. Make the ads useful to your audience, so as to draw them in to find out more. Regarding transparency, Social Media platforms give users the option to find out why they are being targeted with an ad. Bear this in mind when you configure your posts.

Step 4: Review, measure, optimize and reiterate your social media ads strategy

To get the most out of any ad cycle, it's essential to test your content and refresh or alter it, if necessary. The worst thing you can do is let your ads get stale. Changing them catches the attention of the audience and hopefully keeps them engaged.

There are different ways to keep ads relevant and interesting:
- **Use the right language:** Watch how your words, phrases and calls to action affect your audience. Check your text. Have you used the right language and tone?
- **Change the formats:** Are you using photos or images with your ad? Have you tested variations to see which gets the strongest response? The simplest design change could make a difference;
- **Update the landing page:** Check your landing page to make sure ads are successfully going through the funnel.[124] Don't block the funnel with ads; Don't block the funnel with ads;
- **Adjust your ads when the audience changes:** The audience can change with the situation on the ground. For example, a large influx of refugees could change the regular audience for your Social Media account. In this case you will need to refine and refresh your ads;
- **Adjust ads according to trends or issues identified by analytics/indicators:** Change the audience, message, style or other aspect of the campaign depending on what analytics tell you about its effectiveness, reach and engagement. If the audience is not engaging, consider how to reach them and make the ads more accessible or appealing;
- **Check ad previews across different placements, especially** if you are advertising beyond the main platform. For example, in addition to traditional feed and stories, Facebook lets advertisers run ads across audience network placements (external sites and apps) as well as in the Facebook Messenger inbox, page right column and search results. Do your ads look good here?
- **Refresh your ads** to combat ad fatigue.[125]

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124 An online ads funnel is a way of tracking how your ads guide potential customers through a process and lead to actions.
125 Find more information on ad fatigue <u>here</u>.

2. Outreach

For the purpose of this section, we define "outreach" as the ability to reach sectors of the population we are not currently engaging (online and offline). UNHCR is used to conducting outreach[126] activities offline, on the ground. Methods vary from using community structures (e.g. service centers, info-lines and hotlines) to engaging volunteers to conduct door-to-door information campaigns and identify people with specific needs.

In some UNHCR offices, outreach is also done via WhatsApp, Facebook and dedicated websites. (For example, here is information about some of these offices and how to contact them.)

> ❗ **Important**
>
> Social Media can help us reach isolated or stigmatized populations. However, it can also introduce risks for PoCs and expose them to dangerous situations or negative comments. UNHCR staff must consider the harm they could do by targeting Social Media ads to hard-to-reach, stigmatized populations. One way to prevent harm is to preemptively implement detailed Social Media guidelines for monitoring and responding to negative feedback on targeted Facebook ads. UNHCR staff should also identify other risks through a Risk Assessment, completed together with the community (see Chapter 2).

Social Media is by definition an exclusive tool. You will rarely find that the entire population of a country uses or has access to the same platform in the same way. For example, a 'digital gender divide' is often very pronounced in many contexts – with women and girls much less able/likely to use Social Media. So, your outreach on Social Media should be as integrated as possible with all other outreach activities you have online and offline, including the UNHCR corporate Social Media accounts. Consider if specific targeted interventions to address digital divides are required and feasible; this can be determined during participatory assessment processes.

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126 UNHCR Resettlement Service, UNHCR-NGO Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement. Community Outreach - Outreach to Refugee Communities: Definitions and FAQs, June 2011

Social Media Outreach is helpful to:
- Educate young children and teenagers on the safe use of Social Media and allow them to protect themselves (e.g. you could create a Social Media game);
- Communicate with groups who may feel the internet guarantees them a degree of anonymity (e.g. LGBTQI groups or specific ethnic groups);
- Identify and reach out to groups who may be using the online space to discuss specific issues (e.g. women's groups discussing maternal health or groups set up to discuss asylum procedures)

The steps to create an online outreach strategy using Social Media are similar to the ones you would follow offline:

Step 1: Find a middle way between the topic you want to address and the interest of your audience

Users have a choice as to whether they give you their attention. When you select a subject, it should be something they are interested in and that is conducive to being discussed online.

Step 2: Pick your audience and find them where they are

If you are trying to engage with a new audience, find out;
1. whether they are online;
2. what they normally discuss online;
3. what space already exists to discuss the same issues you want to discuss.
The more your outreach strategy uses existing channels, the better.

Step 3: Use ads and trusted networks to expand your reach

As with all community-based work, the ecosystem of actors - from governmental to civil society to informal community structures - is going to be crucial to making your outreach response effective. A targeted use of ads can help enlarge your network, reaching people who might not normally navigate towards your channel. Look through the available brand safety settings to exclude dangerous or inappropriate websites.

Step 4: Link your outreach to overall content, including offline and partners' activities

Social Media can support your work on the ground, especially if you have lots of activities and the audience is large. In this regard, Social Media can amplify existing efforts, even reaching outside the country.

3. Advocacy

'Advocacy' is a set of coordinated activities (ideally contributing to a broader strategy) that seek to protect of persons of concern by promoting changes that bring policy, practice or law into line with international standards. UNHCR and its partners undertake various kinds of advocacy activities, including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing researchand lobbying.[127]

Advocacy aims to influence decision makers and stakeholders to adopt policies and practices that will protect refugees, internally displaced people, stateless people and other affected populations. It is a central element of comprehensive protection and solution strategies.

Combined with other protection activities (such as information sharing, monitoring, negotiation), advocacy can help to transform attitudes, systems and structures that put Persons of Concern at risk. Advocacy messages must have clear objectives and audiences.[128]

Social Media Advocacy can be used to enhance the following protection outcomes:
- To prevent and end human rights violations, and encourage States to respect, protect and fulfill their human rights obligations;
- To ensure humanitarian actors deliver protection and assistance to Persons of Concern in a safe and dignified way, on the basis of need and without discrimination;
- To ensure relevant actors and stakeholders make funds and resources available to meet the needs of PoCs;
- To bring the policies, practice and law of a State into line with international standards (notably refugee law, humanitarian law, human rights law, guiding principles on IDPs, international standards on the prevention of statelessness and the protection of stateless people);
- To promote greater acceptance of Persons of Concern by host communities and combat discrimination and xenophobia.

As with offline advocacy, decisions on advocacy messages should be made on a case-by-case basis, weighing the risks. Will publicizing a statement disrupt an important dialogue with stakeholders in the field? Or persuade stakeholders to open vital areas to humanitarian access? Or heighten the risks faced by persons of concern, host communities, and/or humanitarian staff? Decisions should always be made in the best interests of affected populations. People usually know perfectly well what is best for them. Whenever possible, they ought to be asked whether it is appropriate and safe for advocacy messages on a given topic to be made public.[129]

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127 UNHCR, Advocacy, accessed June 2020
128 UNHCR Emergency Handbook, Advocacy in Emergencies, accessed June 2020
129 UNHCR Emergency Handbook, Advocacy in Emergencies, accessed June 2020

> ### Resource
>
> See more on this topic on the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), Standard Operating Procedures on Public Advocacy Messaging.

To create and manage an advocacy campaign on Social Media you should:

Step 1: Define your objectives

What do you want to say? What issues require advocacy? What do you want to achieve with the intervention? What is the key information you want people to take from it? Answers to these questions should emerge from a well-informed, evidence-based analysis. Don't build advocacy messages on rumors or unconfirmed information. In an emergency setting, it may sometimes be necessary to initiate advocacy before detailed evidence has been gathered and confirmed. Think about what short and long-term effects you want to see, offline and online.

Step 2: Select the audience

Your audience may be organizations, decision-makers or influential people. They could be allies or the actors you are targeting for behavioral change because their actions raise protection concerns. Adopt the appropriate approach for each type of audience and use the Social Media platform that suits them. To reach and build your audience, target ads that are right for them.

Step 3: Decide on your content

Content may be public or restricted; and shared via private chats, selected group chats, public posts, ads, photos, videos, statistics and maps, infographics, video dramas or even online games. Always consider the impact a chosen channel will have; the need for confidentiality; and the potential to harm your sources of information, persons of concern, partners and/or UNHCR. Think practically. Who will do what? How? What channels will be used (Messaging Apps, Social Media, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) systems)? Establish an action plan with clear responsibilities, bearing in mind your Social Media advocacy strategy will need to be interactive and responsive.

Step 4: Be ready to engage and to discuss issues openly

Social Media advocacy differs from offline advocacy in one important respect: it is done in real time and must have an engagement component. When you are advocating for rights online, expect responses, positive and negative, that need to be addressed almost instantaneously. You may have to engage with groups who do not agree with you, and you will find yourself doing so in a public forum. Before you start any online advocacy project, make sure you have a clear and tested system to handle sensitive issues and political conversations, and that your staff is well trained.

Resources

See Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this Guide for more on how to engage in conversations and handle sensitive issues and political topics on Social Media.

Step 5: Make links

Advocacy activities should be joined up with other forms of influencing efforts (e.g., information exchange, reporting, monitoring, negotiation, conferences, etc.). Partners, community groups and influencers, including national advocacy groups, are often the best allies for this. Remember that Social Media allows you to join international campaigns and attract Diaspora into your advocacy strategy. Make sure you have identified and engaged groups who are already active on Social Media – they can be trusted sources and influencers who will help you to implement your strategy.

Factsheet

See Factsheet 8 to learn more about influencers.

Step 6: Monitor implementation

Monitoring should be part of the action plan and advocacy initiatives should be reviewed and adjusted in the light of their impact and effectiveness. Define what you want to measure and make sure you have analytics and key performance indicators that will allow you to see the impact over time. Use both real-time and periodical monitoring systems and adjust the strategy in real time, if needed and as feasible. If your ads have links to pages, implement all necessary tracking codes and parameters to make the best use of data across Analytics platforms.

Messaging Apps

Few Messaging Apps have embedded mechanisms to analyze the data on your channel. For this reason, data analytics is normally done via third-party apps or by hiring a dedicated private company to do it.

On Messaging Apps, as for Social Media in general, numerical analysis of data is relatively easy but the real wealth of information lies in the data that emerges from conversations.

Often though, monitoring and analyzing data from live chats requires more time and needs to be contextualized. The purpose of your protection activity should guide your decisions about what resources to invest in this, and how.

Doing outreach or advocacy via Messaging Apps takes more resources than doing it via Social Media networking platforms. This is because the individual nature of the apps and the customization of the content allow you to reach more but smaller groups. Content has to be tailored for more "intimate" conversations and intense engagement.

Messaging Apps are most effective for advocacy and outreach when tightly linked to offline activities. Community meetings, youth committees, women's groups -- all of these on-the-ground structures can be better connected with Messaging Apps. Protection desks and other UNHCR or protection services can use Messaging Apps to connect with their "customers", promptly reporting changes in service or enabling real-time troubleshooting of delivery problems.

A caveat: Sending bulk messages to a large number of users using uniform content rarely produces the desired outcome. Targeted, customized and smaller-group interactions are more manageable and effective, especially if the topic is sensitive or you foresee that disagreement or tension might arise from the discussion.
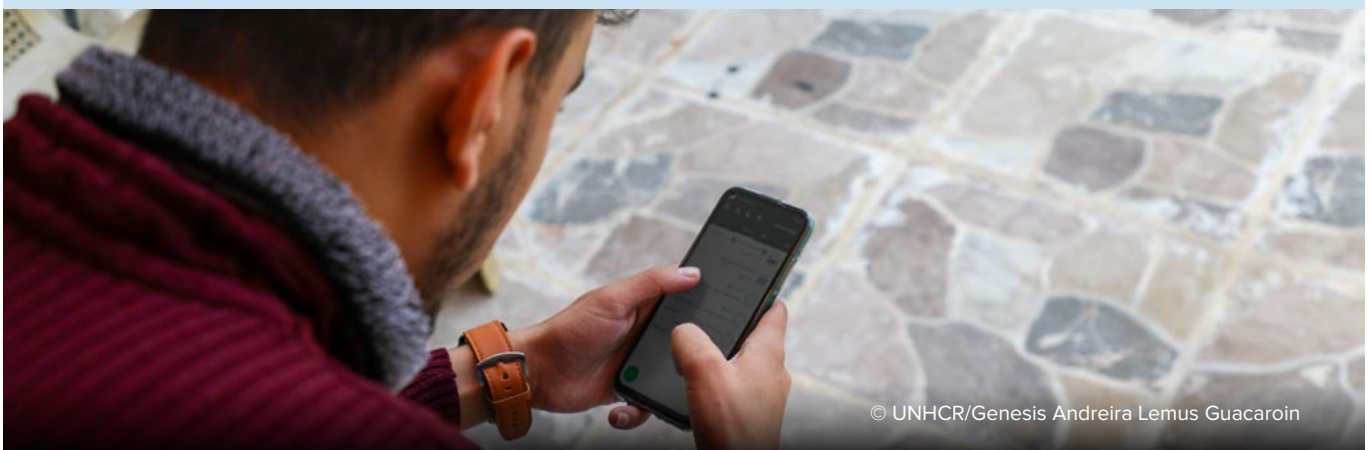
© UNHCR/Genesis Andreira Lemus Guacaroin

Resourcing

Your advocacy budget will depend on the scale of your Social Media strategy (local or national campaign); the profile and size of the audience (host communities, local partners, PoCs, host communities, people on the move (i.e., mixed movements), etc.)); and the method to share the information (e.g, Social Media, e-mail, video documentary).

If you are planning to manage your Advocacy campaign online, you are likely to need the following resources:

- Staff time to collect and check information, prepare advocacy materials, implement initiatives and follow up (in cooperation with partners);
- Information management staff and technical resources to make the most of your Social Media tools and provide technical support on data-related issues;
- An advertising budget;
- Resources to create multimedia content.

The following tips can help you minimize costs and organize an effective advocacy campaign within your means:

- Work with existing online advocacy groups and online communities in the country to identify challenges facing Persons of Concerns that require advocacy. Develop an advocacy strategy and set priorities. Decide how best to share information and how to enable people interact with you. Identify the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors;
- Collect and check evidence continuously. Use the Social Media Analytics discussed above to monitor the situation and collect information. Link the information you gather to programming as well as advocacy. Fill any gaps in evidence using existing information sources. This will allow you to focus your resources on the action/issue you want people to know about;
- Involve partners, Persons of Concern and others in drafting your advocacy strategy and delivering it. Advocacy is often more effective when a variety of partners reinforce the message, especially on Social Media. Remember that Persons of Concern, including children and young people, are often the best advocates for their own protection, and they may be very active on Social Media. In some settings, it can be effective to convene virtual meetings during which minority groups can talk directly to local authorities;
- Share information in accordance with agreed methods, using a range of formats and media. Think about creating a hash tag, or a challenge, making your supporters your advocates. Make the most of low-cost tools like videos or photos taken on mobile phones, podcasts and audio files;
- Always connect with local media and offline feedback systems like call centers to reinforce your message and make your advocacy more interactive.

✓ Do's

✕ Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
DO provide clear gateways to human operators, if you are using an automated system.	**DO NOT** rely on automated systems for sensitive or confidential communication.
DO consistently revise your advocacy, outreach and ads strategies, based on the data collected via Social Media.	**DO NOT** invest in blanket communication strategies that treat your audience as if they were one.
DO be clear about your key messages. What is the purpose of your advocacy/outreach? Establish relevant indicators to measure progress on those purposes.	**DO NOT** use the number of "likes" or "followers" as the main indicator of the success of your Social Media strategy. It is not about the numbers but the quality of engagement.
DO incorporate your Social Media advocacy/outreach activities into your overall protection strategy and when possible, connect it with offline activities.	**DO NOT** create Social Media strategies based on one-way communication. Without engagement, they will die off.
DO adjust your Social Media strategy to your objectives.	**DO NOT** replicate the same advocacy/outreach strategy over time or across multiple contexts, but rather customize it to the local audience.
DO consult extensively and cooperate with others. Seek a goal that is complementary.	**DO NOT** create competitive advocacy or outreach strategies that could undermine the credibility or trust already gained by local actors.
DO proactively identify, assess and manage online risks to avoid surprises. Consider the impact your advocacy could have on POCs and host communities, the humanitarian response and UNHCR's ability to carry out it's mandate.	**DO NOT** run away from negative conversations or reactions to your strategy. Learn how to talk to people who disagree. Create a neutral platform for an open and respectful exchange of views.
DO make sure all advocacy and outreach communications are informed by evidence and fact-checked.	**DO NOT** use jargon. If it is unavoidable, at least explain it.

Check List

Does your Social Media platform have the function to create ads? If so, how does it work?

Have you engaged stakeholders, including communities, in defining your outreach/ advocacy strategies? Who will be the audience?

Have you identified local actors and communities already working on the same outreach/ advocacy topics and determined how best to involve them in your strategy, or to join efforts?

Have you consulted UNHCR experts at the country, regional and/or global level (if appropriate) and involved them in your Social Media advocacy/outreach?

Have you drafted clear advocacy statements and proposed initiatives, discussing them with UNHCR internally, PoCs, host communities and the government (as appropriate)?

Have you created systems to revise your advocacy/outreach strategy as required, taking account of feedback, impact and possible changes on the ground?

Have you identified clear and solid processes and systems to engage with your audience and handle sensitive issues or political conversations that may arise from your outreach/advocacy activities?

Case Studies

McPherson, E., Social Media and Human Rights Advocacy' in the The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights, 2017

Yang, Aimei & Saffer, Adam, NGOs Humanitarian Advocacy in the 2015 Refugee Crisis: A Study of Agenda Building in the Digital Age, American Behavioral Scientist, 2018

Chapter 11

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how to use Social Media to monitor protection activities and identify learning opportunities. It shows you how to link Social Media performance indicators with protection outcome indicators.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are management tools that ensure a protection program is running efficiently and stakeholders are accountable for their activities. They assist in correcting aspects of programs so they can better meet their objectives. Having a well formulated Theory of Change that can be tested by indicators or evaluations is the best way to proceed.[130]

Although they are often combined as "M&E", monitoring and evaluation are distinct activities with different purposes.

- Monitoring is a continuous process that provides early indications of progress in implementation so a programme, intervention or response can be corrected in a timely and responsive manner. It is the ongoing and coordinated review of the response to measure whether planned activities deliver the expected results. On Social Media this process is faster and can happen in real time.[131]

- Evaluation, on the other hand, occurs less frequently and is usually more comprehensive. Periodic and targeted, it complements monitoring by measuring outcomes (the short and medium-term effects of the intervention) and impact (the positive and negative, primary and secondary longer-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended)[132].

A variety of indicators are used to monitor and evaluate a protection strategy. When applying M&E to Social Media, you will have to work with a paired set of indicators. On the one hand, there are indicators to measure the outputs and/or outcomes of the overall protection response; on the other, there are indicators to measure the performance of the Social Media project that supports the protection.[133] This chapter focuses on the second, i.e. the performance of the Social Media strategy/project itself.

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130 UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Chapter 3, Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy, 2007
131 We still have specific performance indicators to monitor programs. Social Media is one among various sources of data for the indicators. Social Media may be generating real-time data but that does not mean it is all relevant to monitoring, or linked to indicators that are monitored continuously in real time.
132 UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Chapter 3, Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy, 2007
133 See more about this in Section 4 of this chapter below.

Resources

- UNHCR's Result Areas and Core Indicators, 2020
- UNHCR, Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of standards & Indicators in UNHCR Operations, 2006

Monitoring provides the first opportunity to measure the activities and outputs of a protection strategy. It is particularly important in operations that require frequent revisions of a plan to respond to a rapidly changing environment, as in an emergency or politically volatile situation.

How a protection strategy is monitored depends on what you are monitoring, and how you articulated your Theory of Change.[134] UNHCR and its partners have various standards and indicators to enhance monitoring, planning, reporting and evaluation capacity.

UNHCR defines an indicator as "a variable scale on which it is possible to objectively measure different points and that corresponds to, or correlates closely with, variations in the conditions of the Refugees and Persons of Concern."[135]

Factsheet

See Fachsheet 5 for a list of goals and impact indicators and their related Social Media activities and performance indicators.

Monitoring and related indicators can be divided into three categories:[136]

- **Situation monitoring:** Measures change in a condition or set of conditions of PoCs in a given operation. Baseline data provides the initial information against which changes can be measured. Baseline and subsequent data can be drawn from online Participatory Assessments, discussions with stakeholders and your Situation Analysis.

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134 See more about what is a Theory of Change here.
135 UNHCR, Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards & Indicators in UNHCR Operations, 2006
136 Whether we are talking about impact or performance indicators, data collected needs to be AGD-disaggregated as much as possible to enable AGD-sensitive program decisions and adjustments

- **Performance monitoring:** Measures progress towards specific results in relation to a plan. This kind of monitoring includes:
  1. Input monitoring, which determines whether human, financial and material resources are deployed and mobilized as planned;
  2. Output monitoring, which establishes whether products or services are being delivered as planned;
  3. Process monitoring, which reviews the processes by which an operation is managed.

  Performance monitoring indicators measure performance towards the achievement of a plan. They are set at the activity level.[137]

  An example would be an online campaign to decrease xenophobic conversations and improve peaceful coexistence. The input monitoring would look at the time and staff used to moderate conversations online, and the costs of ads targeting specific groups. Output monitoring would examine the messages sent, conversations managed and posts published to see how effectively our message was delivered. Process monitoring would look at the full workflow, from the admin of the Social Media accounts and their connection with protection officers on the ground to the extent information flowed to inform decisions.

  Here are examples of activities that can be quantified and/or assessed for quality and timeliness for the purposes of performance monitoring:

  - Short videos promoting girls' school attendance are published weekly from April to September. They reach 70% of the target audience, with over 50% re-shares;
  - New legal clinics in major cities receive 200 IDPs and other Persons of Concern each month, of whom 30% have learnt about the service via Social Media;
  - Information campaigns on access to services reach 80% of the targeted population online. The number of questions related to access to services drops by 50%.

- **Impact monitoring:** Is a program having the desired effect and if not, what changes should be made? Impact monitoring also aims to determine whether any aspect of the Social Media strategy has had a negative or harmful effect for the community writ-large and/or particular.[138]
  Impact indicators are signs of change in conditions or practice that affect the Population of Concern and its welfare[139] They are set at the objective level. For instance:

  - Seventy percent of PoCs using Social Media know and understand data privacy and security on the channels they use;

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137 UNHCR, Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards & IndicatorsS in UNHCR Operations, 2006

138 Impact monitoring can only track change over time. Understanding how change is happening i.e. the extent to which a program is contributing to or causing change would come from a review or evaluation.

139 UNHCR, Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, Chapter 3, Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy, 2007

- The number of online scams targeting refugees and asylum seekers has reduced by at least 50%;
- More than 80% of PoCs hosted in a settlement say they know where and how to access services, thanks to information on Social Media.

When we look at Social Media indicators and performance monitoring, there are some nuances:

- If you are tracking a certain demographic of followers, the absence of some community members can be as telling as the presence of those who interact with you. What can you deduce about the success of your strategy, based on who is not using your Social Media platform?
- How will you know you are moving the needle, especially if you are trying to influence social attitudes? You may have to combine and layer indicators to describe the picture.
- Social Media can be a proxy for users' attitudes and a way of measuring them, as well as a tool to engage and influence behaviors. Use the indicators to understand community attitudes and how and why they change. What can you learn, and what might be more effective in future?

📖 Resource

If your protection goal is community engagement and you want to measure it consistently over time, the UNICEF Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement can be a good place to start. These indicators are intended for government leaders, policymakers, funders, researchers and development and humanitarian practitioners. Specific areas where the suggested standard and indicators might apply include proposal writing, budgeting, budgetary review, M&E systems, SOPs, requests for proposals, scopes of work and job descriptions. They can also be used to evaluate the quality of programs, projects or initiatives; to structure community engagement actions; and to support training and capacity development.

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1. Steps to an Effective Monitoring Plan

The following steps can help you create an effective monitoring plan for your Social Media strategy/ project. Remember, this plan will be just one part of the overall monitoring plan for the CBP strategy/ program.

Step 1: Identify the purpose of your monitoring strategy

Our Social Media activities should be guided by clearly defined goals related to our overall CBP strategy. A goal is a broad statement of purpose that describes the expected long-term effects of a program or campaign. Goals should address the audience and the change we want to see.

Defining your goals:

1. Goals should be SMART.[140] They should follow the time-tested formula: specific, relevant, achievable, measurable and time-bound.
2. Goals should be audience-centered. Social Media is for humans. Translate your population's journey into protection-specific goals:
   Awareness = capturing your community's attention;
   Conversions = driving your community's actions;
   Advocacy = earning your community's respect.
3. Goals should be tied to organizational impact. A good goal is an outcome, not an activity. What needs to happen/change in the next year? While top-priority goals are important, what impacts the bottom line? Pick a Social Media goal for an area where you can make a difference.
4. Goals should start big. Then think what Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you need to track implementation and results. Establish goals that are not only applicable to the needs of POCs and the priorities of the protection response but also achievable. Break them down into monthly and quarterly KPIs.

We recommend identifying two types of goals in your planning:
- Primary goals that describe your top-priority protection outcome, as it relates to your overall Social Media strategy/project;
- Secondary goals, that describe your specific objectives for each Social Media channel.

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140 UNHCR, Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards & Indicators in UNHCR Operations, 2006

> ❗ **Important**
>
> Criteria for a SMART Social Media objective:
> - What are you doing specifically?
> - How will you quantify success or measure a change in results?
> - What is the time frame for measuring the activity?
> - Is this change achievable within the time frame, and with your available resources?
> - How is this activity relevant to your overall goal?

Strategies are general approaches to achieve an objective. Tools are the specific Social Media platforms or technologies that implement the strategy, achieve objectives and attain goals.

Examples of objective strategies and tools to support protection goals:

Goal	To realize the potential for voluntary return
Objective	By [date X] increase the number of People of Concern who access verified information about return via Social Media from 5 to 15%
Activities	User-generated photos and videos illustrating the free choice people have to return, with returnees sharing their experience. Details of support available from UNHCR and partners. Daily AMA (Ask Me Anything) sessions on Social Media to answer questions people may have on voluntary return.
Tools	TikTok, Facebook and Instagram

Keep your objectives realistic by comparing your activity to similar activities offline. Look at what other organizations/actors are doing. Set small initial goals and revise your monitoring plan as you achieve your benchmark. For example, your objective may be to increase engagement with your Facebook posts to five comments per post. As the audience grows, you may aim for 15 comments (assuming you can respond to all of them).

Step 2: Decide who and what to monitor and who will do the monitoring

If you have SMART objectives, then you need SMART indicators to measure them. You can measure the performance of your Social Media strategy by using two types of indicators:

- **Qualitative metrics**, where non-numerical values measure opinions about a given situation, e.g. comments expressing positive/negative attitudes towards Refugees;
- **Quantitative metrics,** where numerical values measure things like the percentage of Refugees reached via your Social Media account or the number of times they engaged.

For a comprehensive understanding, it is best to combine both types. Remember, as with objectives, so with indicators: they must be SMART if they are to be usable and useful. A good monitoring plan will use SMART metrics to measure SMART objectives, and ensure that collect and analyze only the data needed to report on those metrics is collected and anaylzed.[141]
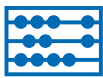
Quantitative Metrics for Social Media

Quantitative metrics can be tracked and analyzed with free built-in tools on a number of Social Media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google Analytics. In addition to measurement tools, you may also need a spreadsheet to track your data.

Resource

See Chapter 9 for more information on how to use Social Media Analytics.

Quantitative metrics help you measure the success of your execution. Often, these are the metrics tied to performance on each channel. They are tracked on a regular basis as part of your execution plan.

Below are some examples of quantitative metrics for Social Media Key Performance Indicators(KPIs). Note that each of these has to be time bound (i.e., expressed with a specific period or 'as of' date):

- **Frequency:** Number of posts published (by users and UNHCR staff and partners);
- **Audience Growth:** Number of new followers ;
- **Reach:** Paid and Organic (or Earned/Owned) reach and impressions;
- **Engagement:** Number of interactions, video views, comments and shares;
- **Traffic Generation:** Number of Referrals or quality visits from Social Media channels.

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141   UNHCR, Practical Guide to the Systematic Use of Standards & Indicators in UNHCR Operations, 2006

Qualitative Metrics for Social Media

While increasing reach, followers and impressions are crucial to achieving your CBP program objectives, the ultimate goals in a Social Media strategy are increased engagement and documenting. It is important to monitor the unintended consequences of using Social Media systematically, particularly looking at any protection risks or concerns that had not been identified before.

There are three levels of engagement on Social Media, which are based on a qualitative assessment of the behaviour of your audience on the platform:

- Low: Information goes one way. You push it out and your audience receives it and takes no action;
- Medium: Information goes two ways. You provide information and your audience responds (likes, replies or shares it);
- High: Your audience begins to create and share information. They may contribute photos, videos or blogs, and give insight on how to improve a campaign or take action.

Campaigns with **medium to high** engagement are more likely to see positive results. By monitoring Social Media engagement throughout your campaign, you can change your strategy if you're not achieving the desired results.

While measuring the number of comments, likes, shares, mentions, re-tweets and replies will give you a picture of the scale of audience engagement, tracking qualitative data will help you understand the nature of those interactions. For example, you can track individual messages communicated each week along with an analysis of the sentiment and/or content of specific comments and replies. Monitoring the conversation will allow you to identify trends on a number of vectors. Who is engaging and what are their levels of interest and knowledge about the topics covered?

Examples of Qualitative Social Media Metrics:

- Content of individual messages;
- Tone of comments and responses: positive, neutral or negative?
- Sentiment associated with certain conversations;
- Issues discussed, and how;
- Popular subjects and outliers;
- Rumors, misinformation and word-of-mouth issues;
- Use of words associated with xenophobia or hate speech.

Step 3: Consider how often you need to report to stakeholders

At this stage, consider the various stakeholders inside and outside UNHCR and how often you need to update them on the progress of your Social Media strategy/project . This will depend on the decisions they are making with the findings of the monitoring, and the time they need to do that.

While the frequency and scheduling of reporting may vary, depending on the topic of the SM strategy/project, it is important to have a clear and detailed monitoring plan to identify trends and/or specific real-time content that might highlight urgent protection risks. An example might be the appearance of sporadic but consistent comments about how much people have paid for relocation with UNHCR. This would indicate that people/groups are posing as UNHCR to profit from PoCs. Or it could be a message inciting people to harm others, specifying a location or time to do so.

Your ability to deal with such matters is directly related to your having pre-defined and tested workflows that allow you to react – and this doesn't mean just deleting messages. You also have to be able to connect with local authorities (as appropriate), offline structures, and staff and partners.

Step 4: Create your monitoring plan (process and schedule)

You saw in Chapter 9 what tools you can use to monitor and track your metrics and progress. Many Social Media platforms, such as Facebook Insights and YouTube Analytics, include built-in metrics tools. There are also paid services that offer more comprehensive monitoring across platforms. Check your list of metrics against those available directly from the Social Media platforms' built-in tools and determine how to meet any gaps. Your indicator plan will show the chosen/prioritized metrics and data source(s) for each.

You must also decide how you will record and share data and information related to the monitoring plan, and what the schedule will be (based on your decision at step 3) . These decisions should stem from the purpose of the Social Media project, i.e. its role in the overall CBP program. Once the frequency is determined, set up a schedule for monitoring, e.g. daily, weekly or monthly (see below). This will help you understand how much time you need for monitoring, bearing in mind how many platforms you are covering, what you are tracking, and how many metrics you have selected.

Sample Social Media Monitoring Schedule

Frequency	Action[142]	Metrics (examples)
Daily	Monitor and respond to Twitter and Facebook comments.	% of comments responded to; % of topics or questions re-occurring.
Weekly	Analyze AGD-disaggregated data to:[143] • Track new followers on Twitter. Identify trends by comparing these numbers to previous weeks; • Track number of Facebook posts, comments and shares; • Track preferences in post formats and topics; • Track level of engagement with each type of format / topic.	% increase of new followers per week on Twitter; % increase of new FB posts, comments and shares; % increase or decrease of PoCs' interest in selected topics.
Monthly	Monitor AGD-disaggregated data to: • Track total activity (e.g. FB posts, Twitter tweets) and engagement (likes, comments, re-tweets, etc.); • Track the tone and sentiment of PoCs' comments and posts and compare with previous data; • Track referrals from your Social Media accounts to other UNHCR or partner websites; • Track access to services described/advertised, including by People of Concern who have learned about it via Social Media.	% increase/decrease in general activity on the Social Media channel; % sentiment associated with particular topics; % of successful referrals; % increase in number of PoCs who report learning about a service via our SM channel.
Quarterly	Track progress toward stated goals. While the above will produce performance data and help you track progress, it is always good to look at quarterly data to see if you can observe patterns over a longer period of time.	
Yearly	• Review and revise Social Media strategy, internally and with partners; • Use your results to plan for next year and inform new project designs and goals.	

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142 All actions and metrics must have a time limit (which may differ from how often indicator data is collected).

143 The specific AGD categories that are relevant for the Social Media and CBP program must be defined. Age, gender and disability are a must but other diversity characteristics could also come in to your plan.

Step 5: Identify reactions to monitoring findings

While your initial Social Media strategy may focus on building an audience, ultimately you want those people to DO something after interacting with you. With the right indicators/metrics, Social Media performance measures help you see how awareness becomes action and you can use these insights in your overall protection and communication planning.

How often you reassess your Social Media strategy (and perhaps the CBP program overall depends on what is working.[144] Devoting time to monitoring helps you see your progress and if necessary, change the approach along the way. It shows the value of your efforts to your organization and funders.

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144 No one should be trying to adjust programs based on monitoring Social Media data alone. Rather, use this data to inform a Community-Based Approach to program design and adaptation.

2. Evaluating CBP Social Media Activities/Programs

Resources

- UNHCR, Policy on Evaluation HCP, 2016 2
- UNEG, Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016
- IASC, Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations of Large Scale System-Wide Emergencies (IAHEs) Guidelines,2014
- UNHCR, Evaluation Strategy, 2018-2022

An evaluation is "an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, program, strategy, policy, operational area or institutional performance. It analyzes both expected and unexpected results by examining the processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability."[145]

According to the UNHCR, UNHCR Policy on Evaluation, 2016, an evaluation should provide useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders. Applying rigorous methods and techniques, an evaluation provides the evidence needed to inform timely decision-making and promote learning. Evaluation is an 'essential step' in the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach.

Learning is the process of incorporating lessons learned into ongoing practices to increase effectiveness and sustainability. Learning includes sharing best practices both internally and externally. While learning does happen through the monitoring process, evaluation takes us a step further to assessing the overall program for learning and accountability purposes.[146]

As explained above, you can monitor your performance on Social Media using qualitative and quantitative metrics, in real time and often from a dedicated dashboard embedded in the platform. While these tools make good use of data from our SM accounts to track our performance with standard measures, evaluations of Social Media projects are most effective when additional information is collected through engagement with Persons of Concern, affected communities and partners.

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145 UNHCR, Policy on Evaluation HCP, 2016 2
146 Keeping regular "Lessons Learned Logs" can make it easier to do an evaluation when it due.

Factsheet

See Factsheet 7 for an in-depth checklist to help you assess if your Feedback & Response mechanism is community-based and integrated to your programme monitoring and evaluation.

Performance indicators for Social Media will be clearly defined as part of the broader performance plan for the CBP program. An in-depth evaluation of the CBP program will reveal the link between Social Media and offline protection.

When evaluating the CBP program and Social Media component, your prior Situation Analysis will be the roadmap for looking at intended and unintended consequences and possible changes. The Participatory Assessments give a baseline and can be replicated over time to complement or complete the data collected during evaluation.

Messaging Apps

Like Social Media, Messaging Apps are used differently by different people. So relying on data gathered solely through apps risks introducing statistical bias into the analysis of a particular issue, as the sample may not be representative. Differences in individuals' access to mobile phones could affect the way populations are represented. Conclusions based on this skewed data risk reinforcing exclusion and inequality.

But Messaging Apps can be extremely useful for rapid assessments of PoCs' opinions or ideas. Third-party companies have systems to survey people in certain locations, using mobile credit as rewards. These could be used with PoCs in remote areas, providing the operational context allows for this and the systems match our CBP objectives.

Few Messaging Apps have embedded analytics systems, so you would have to use third-party systems via API to extract the data and analyze it.

As with Social Media, so with apps, it is important not to rely only on quantitative metrics to measure engagement or protection outcomes. The number of people engaged and/or the number of messages exchanged are not reliable indicators of the outcome of the activity or the effect it has on PoCs being able to access their rights

Resourcing

Implementing, monitoring and evaluating a Social Media strategy takes time, effort, resources and planning. Here are some ways to maximize your impact:

- Participate in evaluations by other agencies and partners at global, regional and country levels, especially if they too are looking at online content or SM protection strategies;
- Seize opportunities to initiate, commission and manage evaluations jointly with partners at global, regional and country level, so as to share costs and maximize outputs;
- Start with existing monitoring systems embedded in platforms and only after you have a better sense of what (if anything) is missing to meet your data needs, think of using third-party monitoring systems or creating your own;
- Remember that Excel is probably the best free tool to monitor, analyze and produce reports using your Social Media data;
- Rely on the expertise in your organization, especially Information Management colleagues in your operation or Regional Bureau, the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR), and the Evaluation Service.

✓ Do's

DO keep it simple. Only measure what you need and can measure. It's not about what you can track but what you need to track to report on your selected metrics/indicators.

DO link back to your objectives. Be clear about the questions you are asking, why and how you plan to answer them. Select indicators that are most relevant and collect data only for these.

DO feed your Social Media M&E into wider efforts to measure protection outcomes and impact. M&E can't assess overall CBP project or programme impact but it should be a part of that process.

DO identify the intended users of your monitoring data and findings. Who can and should make decisions based on the findings and what is the best format for them to receive it? These questions should be answered before monitoring begins, so your monitoring plan reflects their needs and data can be processed, analyzed and presented in a way that will be useful to them.

✕ Don'ts

DO NOT just focus on website statistics. Even if you only pick a few indicators, think more broadly about M&E to include quality and usefulness, uptake and use of your outputs.

DO NOT entirely base your M&E on data analytics, without involving communities and Persons of Concern.

DO NOT treat your Social Media activities as stand-alone but rather try to evaluate them in relation to the overall CBP strategy. Bear in mind the context, including possible changes on the ground.

DO NOT underestimate the use of qualitative metrics, especially if your protection outcomes involve some sort of behavioral change.

✓ Check List

Have you identified how the findings of performance monitoring will be used to adapt the Social Media strategy specifically and/or the CBP strategy generally? Who will do this and when in relation to the program cycle? ☐

Have you linked the performance indicators for your Social Media strategy to protection indicators? ☐

Have you defined your objectives, activities and tools in collaboration with all stakeholders, including communities? ☐

Have you defined with all stakeholders your SMART goals and SMART indicators/metrics? ☐

Have you decided exactly what to monitor and which performance metrics/indicators will allow you to do this? How often and for how long will you monitor these? ☐

Have you identified who will be responsible for each step of Social Media performance monitoring (I.e., collecting, compiling, cleaning, visualizing and analyzing the data, and reporting on the findings)? ☐

Have you discussed with stakeholders the question of who needs to see the data and/or the findings, how often and in what format? ☐

Have you created a schedule for monitoring real-time and asynchronous data? ☐

Have you assessed the resources needed to implement your monitoring plan? ☐

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Case Studies

DFID, Using Social Media for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in the MENA Region: World Food Program Case Study, 2017

Cassidy C. and Ball L., Communications Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning Toolkit, ODI, January 2018

Pulido CM, Redondo-Sama G, Sordé-Martí T, Flecha R, Social Impact in Social Media: A New Method to Evaluate the Social Impact of Research, PLOS ONE, 2018

Fact Sheets

1. Sample of Online Sources for a Social Media Desk Review

Remember that all secondary sources should be checked for reliability before being used.

Topic	Source/Content
Social Media Penetration	Data Reportal, in partnership with We Are Social and Hootsuite, collects information from UTI, SM companies and other stakeholders to publish annual reports on countries' access to Social Media, including disaggregated analysis by gender and age. You can find them here.
Technology Landscape in a Country	Every year the advocacy organization Freedom House publishes the "Freedom of the Net", looking at country-level digital issues like online barriers to access, obstacles to user rights and restriction of content.
Media Landscape	The CDAC Network has a library of Media Landscape Guides, some unfortunately dated. But these guides give an idea of the role of local media, including the digital sphere, in various countries. They also point out opportunities and risks.
Internet Connectivity	As the UN-specialized agency for ICTs, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the official source for global ICT statistics. On their websites you can find country-by-country data like: 1. Fixed telephone subscriptions (excel) 2. Mobile cellular subscriptions (excel) 3. Percentage of individuals using the internet (excel) 4. Fixed broadband subscriptions (excel) 5. Gender ICT statistics (excel)
Mobile	GSMA often releases studies looking at connectivity and access to mobile for refugees/IDPs and other groups. In these reports you can find statistics about mobile penetration in camps, what people do with mobile and what information they seek. See an example here.
Governance	Ranking Digital Rights (RDR) Index ranks companies on indicators evaluating their disclosure of commitments, policies, and practices affecting freedom of expression and privacy. The RDR Index includes policies of the parent company, operating company, and selected services provided by the company. RDR methodology and indicators can be used by local NGOs to conduct assessments of national telco providers.

INGOs	Organizations like Internews, BBC Media Action, Translators Without Borders and Reach Impact often conduct revealing assessments of the way communities communicate; their access to internet/mobile and their information networks; their trusted sources; their languages and habits.
Local Authorities	The Ministry of Information (or similar) may have a public report on the coverage of the internet and mobile connection in your country. In some countries, the media work with the government under a national media working group. This may have information about access to information and the most commonly used media channels. Be aware of the local political context and potential biases and inaccuracies in official reports.
International Organizations	The World Bank Open Data Portal also reports on issues related to ICT in any given country. The UNDP Human Development Data Portal can be good for fresh information about connectivity and mobile penetration, and how they relate to other development indicators.

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2. Sample Questions to Assess Risks Related to Physical Infrastructure and National Regulatory Frameworks

The following questions are part of the "Freedom of the Net Index" methodology to measure a country's level of internet and digital media freedom. They have been developed with international experts to capture the vast array of issues that affect internet freedom.

The index focuses on the transmission and exchange of news and other politically relevant communications, as well as the protection of users' rights to privacy and freedom from legal and extralegal repercussions from their online activities. The index acknowledges that in some instances, freedom of expression and access to information may be legitimately restricted. The standard for such restrictions is that they be applied in narrowly defined circumstances, in line with international human rights standards, the rule of law, and the principles of necessity and proportionality.
Find more information and questions here.

The questions here are for guidance. They should be adapted to the context.

A. Obstacles to Access

1. Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections?

2. Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain groups for geographical, social or other reasons?

3. Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity?

4. Are there legal, regulatory or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers?

5. Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology operate in a free, fair and independent manner?

B. Limits on Content

1. Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content?

2. Do state or non-state actors employ legal, administrative or other means to force publishers, content hosts or digital platforms to delete content?

3. Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims or an independent appeals process?

4. Do online journalists, commentators and ordinary users practice self-censorship?

5. Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest?

6. Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online?

7. Does the online information landscape lack diversity?

8. Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities and campaign, particularly on political and social issues?

C. Violations of User Rights

1. Does the Constitution or do other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information and press freedom, including on the internet? Are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence?

2. Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities?

3. Are individuals penalized for online activities?

4. Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption?

5. Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy?

6. Are service providers and other technology companies required to aid the government in monitoring the communications of their users?

7. Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in retribution for their online activities?

8. Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers or individual users subject to widespread hacking or other forms of cyber-attack?

3. Information for Participatory Planning

If you have done your situation analysis properly, you should have an idea of the context (including protection needs and risks) that will allow you to balance the commitment to "DO NO HARM", the principle of inclusion and participation and the imperative to protect.

Consider these questions when deciding whether to use Social Media for protection purposes:

What types of content do people want and need on Social Media? Which topics do they respond to most? ☐

What needs and challenges exist on Social Media with regard to your protection objectives? What support can UNHCR give? ☐

Who are the trusted partners/communities UNHCR could engage with? ☐

What Social Media channels should be used, bearing in mind the ones the community is already using and the languages and formats they prefer? ☐

What are the data protection, privacy and protection risks and weaknesses associated with Social Media and the particular channel selected? What can be done to mitigate them?[147] ☐

Who will be reached with SM and who will be left out? How can you mitigate this? ☐

What is the profile of the online communities? What are their technical capacities and skills? ☐

How is the Social Media community organized? What are the formal and informal structures and how do they link to offline life? ☐

To what extent are Persons of Concern, the host community and the Diaspora connected online? What is the "quality" of the interactions? Where are the points of tension? ☐

Are there protection mechanisms to support groups with specific needs and those at heightened risk? ☐

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147 See Chapter 2 of this Guide for more information on conducting a Social Media Risk Assessment.

Which local service providers, actors or groups are already engaging with PoCs online and for what purpose?

☐

Do people have resources, such as facilitated access, tools, skills and knowledge?

☐

To what extent do women, girls, boys and men of all ages and diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities and older persons, have access to and use Social Media? Who or what affects this access and who is excluded and why?

☐

What are the power relations between different online communities and individuals? Who is the loudest? Who do people trust? Who has influence over which group? How is it exercised and to whose benefit? Are there any tensions?

☐

What digital services and facilities are available to Persons of Concern in the host community and with local government?

☐

What are the relevant laws and legal recourses? For example, are there laws to prevent hate speech and discrimination, or to protect privacy and personal data? How effective are they?

☐

What information on Social Media may be used by PoCs to make important decisions, including – for example - voluntary return?

☐

What are the main protection challenges associated with using SM, including scams, privacy issues, cyber-security risks and social engineering? What might be the durable solutions?

☐

What online information comes from the place of origin (in the case of refugee situations)? How is it used in the Social Media discourse and what might be the consequences on the ground in the host country?

☐

4. Types of Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information. Examples include rumors, insults and pranks. **Disinformation** is deliberate and includes malicious content such as hoaxes, spear phishing and propaganda. It spreads fear and suspicion among the population.

Types of Misinformation and Disinformation:

1. **Fabricated Content:** Completely false content;
2. **Manipulated Content:** Genuine information or imagery that has been distorted, e.g. a sensational headline or populist 'click bait';
3. **Imposter Content:** Impersonation of genuine sources, e.g. using the branding of an established agency;
4. **Misleading Content:** Misleading information, e.g. comment presented as fact;
5. **False Context:** Factually accurate content combined with false contextual information, e.g. when the headline of an article does not reflect the content;
6. **Satire and Parody:** Humorous but false stores passed off as true. There is no intention to harm but readers may be fooled;
7. **False Connections:** When headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content;
8. **Sponsored Content:** Advertising or PR disguised as editorial content;
9. **Propaganda:** Content used to manage attitudes, values and knowledge;
10. **Error:** A mistake made by established new agencies in their reporting.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also given birth to new forms of misinformation and disinformation. We call this Synthetic Media to indicate the artificial production, manipulation and modification of data and multimedia by automated means, especially AI algorithms, to mislead or change original meaning. There are fears that synthetic media could supercharge fake news, spread misinformation and distrust of reality and automate creative jobs.

"Deep Fakes" are one type of synthetic media where a person in an existing image or video is replaced with someone else's likeness. While the act of faking content is not new, deep fakes use powerful techniques from machine learning and AI to manipulate or generate visual and audio content with a high potential to deceive. Deep Fakes have garnered widespread attention for their use in revenge porn, fake news, hoaxes and financial fraud. Industry and governments are concerned to detect and limit their use. Some countries already have a national response or national institutions are working on it.

"Speech Synthesis" is another branch of synthetic media that can artificially produce human speech. A computer used for this purpose is called a "speech computer" or "speech synthesizer". Synthesized speech concatenates pieces of recorded speech or it incorporates a model of the vocal tract and other human voice characteristics to create a completely "synthetic" voice.

In addition to new and more sophisticated ways of manipulating content, there are also a growing number of ways in which Social Media can be used to manipulate conversations:

- A **Sockpuppet** is an online identity used to deceive. The term now extends to misleading uses of online identities to praise, defend or support a person or organization; to manipulate public opinion; or to circumvent restrictions, suspension or an outright ban from a website. The difference between a pseudonym and a sockpuppet is that the sockpuppet poses as an independent third party, unaffiliated with the main account holder. Sockpuppets are unwelcome in many online communities and forums;
- **Sealioning** is a type of trolling or harassment where people are pursued with persistent requests for evidence or repeated questions. A pretense of civility and sincerity is maintained with these incessant, bad-faith invitations to debate;
- **Astroturfing** masks the sponsors of a message (e.g. political, religious, advertising or PR organizations) to make it appear as though it comes from grassroots participants. The practice aims to give organizations credibility by withholding information about their motives or financial connections;
- **Catfishing** is a form of fraud where a person creates a sockpuppet or fake identity to target a particular victim on Social Media. It is common for romance scams on dating websites. It may be done for financial gain, to compromise a victim or as a form of trolling or wish fulfillment.

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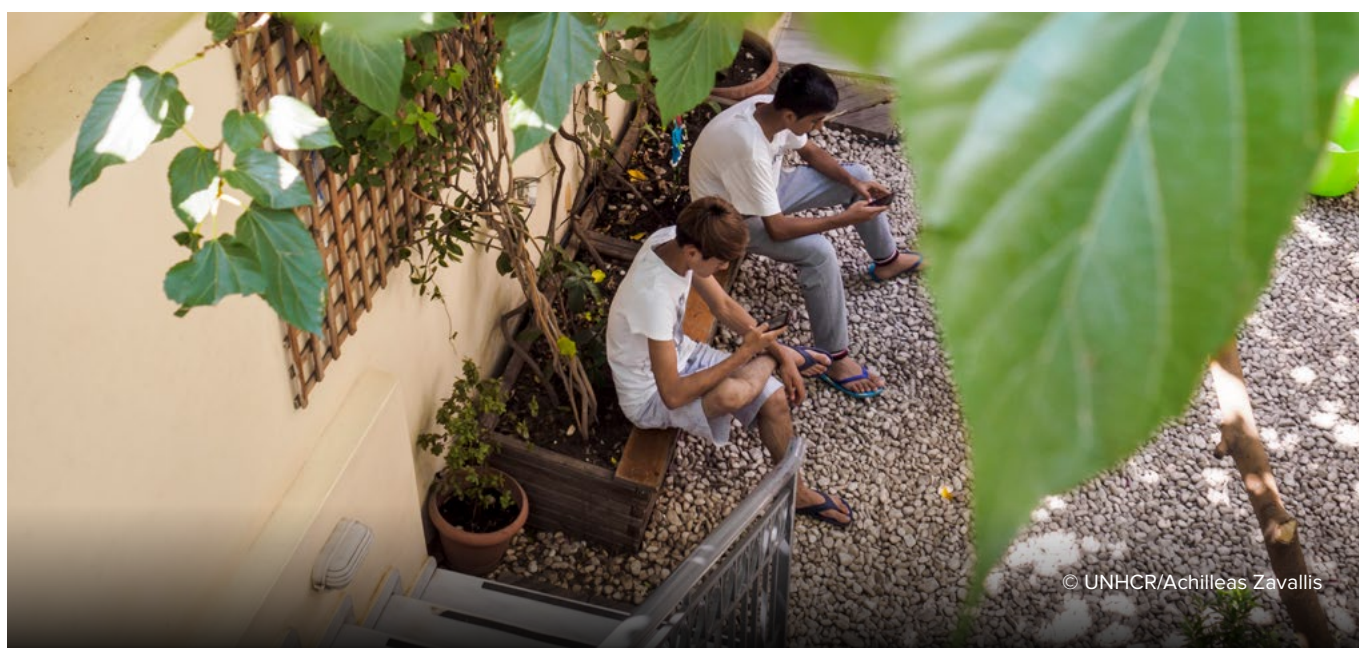
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5. Social Media Activities, with Impact and Performance Indicators

Impact Areas	Indicators	Examples of Social Media Activities	Examples of Indicators for Social Media Activities
Attaining Favorable Protection Environments.	Proportion of individuals seeking international protection, who are able to access asylum procedures.	• Feedback collection about the effectiveness of legal services from people using them; • Polls or interactive discussions on Social Media to find out what and how much people know about these services; • Information provision about where and how to access these services.	• Change in number of PoCs on Social Media who can explain how these services work; • People accessing services who say they learnt about them from Social Media.
Securing Solutions-1.	Proportion of PoCs affected by racism, xenophobia and intolerance.	• Campaign on Social Media to discuss xenophobia and intolerance (videos, influencers, open polls, live streamed discussions, content moderation); • Set up or join an existing helpline to report and support victims of xenophobic and intolerant conversations on Social Media.	• *% of PoCs engaged on Social Media (per platform); • % of PoCs on Social Media who say they have changed their minds about the issue after engagement; • % of PoCs who use the helpline

Securing Solutions-2.	Proportion (and number) of Refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin (Global Compact on Refugees)	• Support to self-organized groups who share information about their return journey on Social Media; • Creation of a Social Media app to "follow" returnees on their journey, providing updated information on services along the way.	• % People reached via SM groups supported by UNHCR; • % Returnees who use the app; • % People who say it was useful to them.
Protecting Children.	Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure.	• Engagement campaign with PoCs to discuss the issue and propose solutions; • Advocacy campaign with influencers on Social Media; • Together with government agencies, monitoring of possible criminal groups using Social Media to target minors.	• % of PoCs participating in the discussion on Social Media ; • % Change in attitudes about harmful traditional practices on Social Media; • % People engaged in the conversation on issues of child protection; • % Reported cases of Social Media scams that were aimed at children (on total reported cases)
Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality-1.	• Proportion of PoCs who know where to access GBV services; • Proportion of PoCs who reject violence against women; • Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV Case Management services	• If safe and appropriate to do so (see Risk Analysis Chapter 2): • Engage positive influencers to start online discussion about GBV, involving youth; • Use multimedia (videos, audio files, interactive systems) to help PoCs find information about GBV services; • Have a mobile app to share information about GBV services and ask questions about them.	• % People engaged in the conversation; • % Increase in the use of GBV services over time; • % People who have received information on GBV services via Social Media engagement activities; • % People using the service who say it was useful/helped them to make decisions.

Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality-2.	Extent to which local communities support continued presence of PoCs.	• Moderated and guided online conversations between host communities and Refugees; • *Advocacy campaign to explain Refugees' and other PoCs' rights.	• % People involved in the online conversations (per session); • % People who said their engagement in the dialogue made them change their mind; • % Change in sentiment towards PoCs in the host community's posts or comments; • % Increase in the number of people responding positively to the advocacy campaign
Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality-3.	Number of operations with satisfactory participation of diverse groups in all phases of management. cycle.	• Using Social Media to inform PoCs about their rights and involve them in decision-making; • Creating and using Social Media platforms to engage PoCs in discussions about measures that affect them.	% Increase in PoCs who talk directly with implementers on Social Media to say how measures affects them;

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6. Connectivity for Refugees

The Connectivity for Refugees (CfR) initiative, launched in 2016, sits within UNHCR's Innovation Service. It focuses on catalyzing connectivity innovations and solutions from the field. It uses research to gain an all-round picture of the intersections of connectivity and displacement, capturing bright spots through storytelling and strategic communications.

The CfR initiative provides support to operations with:

Field Experimentation:

CfR supports the piloting of creative and inclusive approaches to connectivity at national level and financially supports regional and country operations that undertake them. Operational support builds on learning, ensuring that staffing is matched with the necessary technical support and guidance to meet desired outcomes. Learning from field interventions is documented and shared with the wider community to show emerging and promising practices;

Research & Advocacy:

Strong links between research and advocacy are vital. They ensure research supports operational goals and policy change, as well as providing space for thought on emerging issues. Where research, data and evidence highlight areas for advocacy, these will be taken forward by UNHCR at global, regional and country level. One such area is the provision of legal pathways for refugees and other forcibly displaced people to access connectivity;

Partnership Building:

In order to achieve goals, strong and comprehensive partnerships are essential. UNHCR is reaching out across the humanitarian sector - to governments, the private sector and communities themselves - to exploit new and creative models for engagement and collaboration. With strong inter-agency coordination, all partners can benefit from each others' experience, bringing lessons, information and data to the table to help drive an agenda that challenges assumptions about refugee inclusion;

Capacity Building and Guidance on Digital Access and Inclusion:

The CfR initiative provides technical advice and support for strategic, contingency and operational planning. It facilitates engagement with specialist technical networks and can help to identify and recruit skilled technical experts

Practical Resources

- UNHCR Connectivity for Refugees: Website of the Connectivity for Refugees initiative.

- Connectivity for Refugees Glossary: A glossary to navigate the universe of connectivity, with definitions and information in simple, jargon-free language.

- Connectivity for Refugees Emergency Handbook: Practical toolkit to respond to the immediate connectivity needs of the displaced during crises and humanitarian emergencies (Available in French, Spanish and Arabic).

- How to Work with Mobile Network Operators: Practical resources designed to help UNHCR operations engage with Mobile Network Operators in a systematic way.

- Mobile Money: Essential Considerations for Humanitarian Practitioners: Toolkit for humanitarian organizations that advises on the use of mobile money solutions for cash transfers.

- GSMA Refugee Connectivity Portal: Resources and research on connectivity by GSMA.

- UNHCR, Communicating with Communities: Short guide consolidating the UNHCR Innovation Service's experience of communicating with communities. It contains a selection of tools and videos to enhance the work of field practitioners.

7. Checklist to Evaluate a CBP Feedback and Response Mechanism

This checklist has two aims:

1. To help operations establish how well their feedback systems are set up from the point of view of PoCs and;

2. To help operations determine if their feedback systems are well connected to other such systems across the operation.

Does the feedback system work for PoCs? How?

1. Was the feedback system designed and implemented in consultation with diverse PoCs to ensure it is accessible and suitable? ☐

2. Does the feedback system include various online and offline channels and guarantee safety and confidentiality? ☐

3. Is this a single service or an integrated system with various parts?

    a) If single service, where does information go once received? ☐

    b) Does it have designated processes and resources to use information and/or respond appropriately? ☐

    c) It is primarily outgoing or also incoming? ☐

4. Is it responsive to individual day-to-day queries? If so, in what way? ☐

5. Is it responsive over time to collective priorities (e.g. resettlement, housing, jobs)? If so, in what way? ☐

6. What is the ratio of platform use by PoCs (compared with total PoC population), disaggregated by age, gender and diversity? ☐

7. Is the platform safe and accessible for men, women, boys and girls of different languages, statuses etc.? If so, in what way? Which of these groups are under-represented or not represented among the platform's users? Does regular monitoring determine and explain AGD-differentiated use of the platform? How are use rates captured by sexuality, social identity or religion? ☐

8. Is PoC use dependent on access to data plans or mobile phones, whether personal, shared or borrowed? If so, what have you done to address the fact that PoC use also depends on digital literacy? ☐

9. Is PoC use dependent on access granted by gatekeepers who may affect behavior (e.g. a mobile phone monitored by a parent, guardian or husband)? If so, what have you done to address it? ☐

10. Does the system translate unstructured information into individual and collective, short and long-term considerations and priorities? If so, in what way? ☐

11. Have any prevention activities been implemented on the basis of feedback? ☐

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How does the feedback system link with operational and strategic responsiveness?

1.   Do resource allocation and staff capacity change with increased volume of PoC two-way engagement? If so, in what way? Have a look at:

   a)   % of population that can be accommodated;
   b)   % of users accommodated;
   c)   % of users by AGD group accommodated.

2.   Does AGD responsiveness depend on implementing partners? Do they have resources, interoperable systems and training to cope with demand? How does the operation support them in developing their capacity to respond?

3.   Does the feedback system monitor the frequency and quality of responses across AGD categories?
   a)   AGD Use – Diverse ages;
   b)   AGD Use – Girls and women, boys and men, older persons, people with disabilities, people with different sexual and gender identities;
   c)   AGD use – Diverse languages and abilities.

4.   Does the feedback system capture data on the concerns and priorities of PoC groups under-represented in, or excluded from, specific feedback or digital two-way communication platforms?

5.   Do intermediary teams convert unstructured feedback into information that can be acted upon by relevant units and decision-makers for short and long-term program adaptation or agenda setting?

6.   Is there a process for combining structured and unstructured feedback from a range of sources and are there tools for integrated use by decision makers at sector, program and leadership levels in the operation?

7.   Is implementation of this process monitored to ensure feedback is systematically integrated in decision-making at all levels?

8. Influencers and How to Choose Them

Influencers on Social Media are people who have built a reputation for their knowledge on a particular topic. They post regularly on that topic and attract large, rapt followings. They are trendsetters with the authority to encourage followers to advocate for a cause or donate to it.

Influencers vary, as do their methods; you can group them by the niche in which they operate. Influencers who may appear low-level by certain criteria may look more influential when seen another way. For example, many mega-influencers are celebrities. Yet they may have less influence on their audience than real experts in a narrow niche. Some micro and even nano-influencers have a tremendous influence in their specialist field. They may help you target a specific sector of the population
.

Types of Influencers by Followers

- **Mega-Influencers** - Mega influencers have vast numbers of followers on their networks. Although there are no fixed rules, a common view is that mega-influencers have more than a million followers on at least one social platform. Many mega-influencers are celebrities who gained their fame offline. They may be movie stars, sportspeople, musicians or TV personalities;
- **Macro-Influencers** - Macro-influencers are more accessible as influence marketers. They may have 40,000 to one million followers on a given social network;
- **Micro-Influencers** - Micro-influencers are ordinary people who have become known for their expertise in a certain area. They have usually gained a sizable Social Media following amongst devotees of that subject. Micro-influencers normally have 1,000 to 40,000 followers on a single social platform;
- **Nano-Influencers** - Nano influencers, or 'nanos' for short, are new to the influence marketing scene. They may have as few as 1,000 followers and no more than 5,000. But trying to define this kind of influencer by their follower count goes against what they stand for. They are ordinary but highly literate digital citizens, with a natural propensity to influence, and the size of their audience is not what matters. Deemed more genuine than macro influencers, nanos have a reputation for being more approachable, less commercially driven and easier to work with than the big shots.

Due Diligence to Identify Influencers

Identifying influencers is part of your Social Media Situation Analysis and needs to take into account:

- **Relevance:** Are the influencers you are considering relevant to your mission and purpose, and therefore to your audience? An influencer's past content must match your intentions and values. It is vital for UNHCR and partners to engage with the community to understand who they follow, like and consider relevant on Social Media;
- **Reach:** It is important to reach the people you are targeting but influencers with the largest followings may not always be the best for this. Do a bit of research on the influencer's audience. An individual may cater to a specific industry that is relevant to your mission but they could also have a younger audience than you are hoping to reach. Sometimes a smaller but higher quality audience may be right for your needs;
- **Values:** When doing Social Media marketing, it is really important to know your own values before trusting an influencer to uphold UNHCR's image. Your values and theirs must be a good match to ensure the relationship between your brand and the influencer is appropriate, effective and worthwhile.

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