



Using social media in CBP - 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, persons 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.

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);

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

⁷⁵ UNHCR Innovation, [Communicating with Communities](#), accessed 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

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. Institutional 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;

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).



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.”

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 following is 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 their 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;

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.

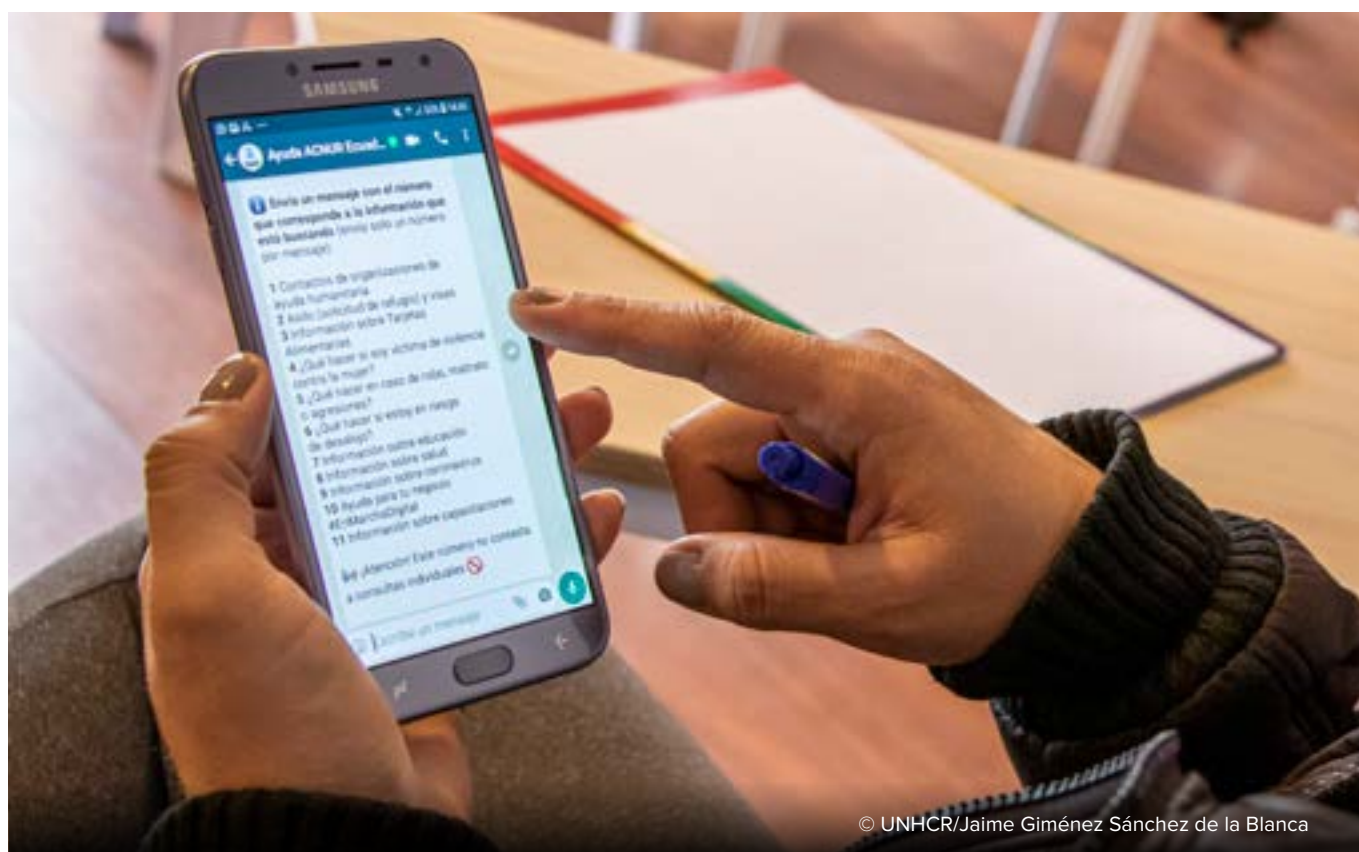
DO NOT dismiss the importance of regular Participatory Assessments. These should take place more than once a year, even if your Social Media page has a high level of likes/followers.

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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Case Studies

- [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](#)