

# 3



## Implementing a community-based approach

This section gives an overview of the different stages of the community-based approach, beginning with situation analysis, including stakeholder analysis and participatory assessment, and planning. It then explains the different aspects of community mobilization and empowerment, from mapping leadership and management structures to community-based action planning, monitoring and evaluation. It also highlights the need to identify individuals at heightened risk and to establish individual case management systems based on work with the community.

Communities and cultures are not static; they constantly change. Communities of refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees have social and cultural traditions, religious practices, economic activities, associations and networks, protection mechanisms and political structures that existed prior to displacement. Displacement disrupts many of these familiar ways of life, but it can also be an opportunity for learning new skills and incorporating new knowledge, activities and structures into daily life. Implementing a community-based approach during humanitarian crises involves mobilizing individuals and communities and supporting them in their decisions about how to cope with the upheaval,

re-establish community structures and ensure that protection and solutions respect individual rights.

### 3.1 Situation analysis

*Its purpose.* Situation analysis enables humanitarian workers and the community to understand the context of the displacement or crisis in order to determine the most appropriate 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.

*What it is.* Situation analysis in UNHCR is composed of three interlinked phases: information analysis; stakeholder resources and capacity-mapping; and participatory assessment, to gain a common understanding of protection risks, capacities and solutions. These can lead to a participatory planning process to establish UNHCR Country Operation Plans, inter-agency humanitarian appeals or work plans, or community action plans. Situation analyses should be undertaken regularly, regardless of the stage of the operation. Representatives of community-based organizations should be involved in inter-agency and stakeholder planning meetings.

*How it is carried out.* The analysis is undertaken through a desk review of existing information, including data gathered about the population. It also involves identifying the different stakeholders to learn about their interests and priorities, and mapping their activities, resources and expertise. A participatory assessment is then conducted with the different members of the population to understand their protection risks, capacities and proposals and to test the validity of the existing information and analysis. Working together, all actors should analyze the final results of the assessment, the protection risks, proposed solutions and resource implications in order to determine priorities, programmes and budgets and prepare action plans.

#### 3.1.1 Information analysis

This phase helps determine what is already known about the persons of concern and their situation by analyzing documentation and data. It allows

us to prepare for participatory assessments and consultations with a protection focus.

It is important to know about the community's culture and protection mechanisms prior to flight. Information about the host community and all other stakeholders should also be gathered. To identify potential protection risks and those groups with specific needs, gather information on the number of unaccompanied and separated children, single-parent-headed families, single women, persons with disabilities, older persons and grandparent-headed households, and how women's and men's roles have changed. Analysis of this information, which might reveal groups who need priority protection, including assistance, can then be shared with the community and validated with the populations concerned during participatory assessments. UNHCR's Strengthening Protection Capacities Framework, which is a tool for identifying gaps in protection, can also help structure the analysis.<sup>30</sup> The following information should be analyzed:

Country Operation Plans, annual protection reports, standards and indicators, security and mission reports (on child protection, community service, gender, sexual and gender-based violence, and Inspector General reports), in order to identify protection incidents, security challenges and assistance needs; to highlight persistent problems and gaps; and to identify community coping mechanisms and solutions.

ProGres database and all other information related to the registration of persons of concern, in order to understand the profile of the population by age, sex, family composition, ethnic/religious origins and specific needs.<sup>31</sup> Community-services and protection staff should ensure that data on groups with specific needs are regularly gathered and updated, and that persons at heightened risk are identified and monitored.

Existing assessments and analyses, such as food basket-monitoring reports, joint WFP-UNHCR food assessments, health reports, including data from health-information systems, HIV/AIDS studies, environmental assessments, economic surveys and feasibility studies for livelihoods, in order to learn about the diet and purchasing power of people in the local area, and about the impact of displacement on natural resources.

Studies of national legislation and provisions relevant to persons of concern from an age, gender and diversity perspective, in order to understand how and whether people of concern enjoy freedom of movement, equality, the right to work, access to services, and family and child protection.

Government reports and plans on national health, education and other services, to see how they incorporate the needs of persons of concern, particularly in the case of internally displaced persons and returnees. It is also important to review UN country plans to see how they incorporate persons of concern and to advocate that they be included.

Political analysis documents reviewing the situation in the areas of displacement and country of origin, reports from non-governmental organizations, universities, human rights organizations and other civil associations, such as local women's groups, that provide analyses of the human rights situation, and ethnographic and anthropological studies.

Maps of the area of origin and the area of displacement. Note the proximity to the border or conflict area, resources available and, in the case of urban populations, where people live.

Note factors such as land availability, plot sizes and the location of key infrastructure, natural resources, local markets, services and known zones of conflict, landmines, violence, exploitative practices and insecurity, and specific places or routes that are known to present a danger to persons of concern. This map can be used later in participatory exercises with focus groups to stimulate discussion about protection and related problems within the host area. In urban areas, note the distance to services, including the offices of UNHCR and its partners, and centres to which resources could be directed to better serve persons of concern.

When reviewing existing information using an age, gender and diversity perspective, consider:<sup>32</sup>

The profile of the community, including capacities and skills, and who is most at risk.

How the community is organized, its formal and informal structures and the roles these play in community life.

The extent to which women, girls, boys and men of all ages and diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, participate in community management and decision-making, and who might be excluded and why. Community-protection mechanisms to support persons with disabilities and other groups with specific needs, and identify those who are at heightened risk.<sup>33</sup>

Resources available to people, such as land, tools, skills, and informal markets.

The power relations between the different community members: Who has power over whom? How is it exercised? To whose benefit?

The services and facilities available to persons of concern within the host community and local government.

The interaction between the host population and persons of concern, and points of tension.

The main protection challenges and the possibilities for durable solutions.

The situation in the place of origin and the changes due to displacement.

Which topics and individuals should be the focus of the participatory assessment phase.



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### Ten questions to ask when analyzing registration data

Determine the percentage of the population by sex, age group, and other factors, and consider:

- ✓ Is it the same as the local population? Does it coincide with the data from the country of origin?
- ✓ Is there a higher-than-average percentage of women? Children? Older persons? Persons with disabilities?
- ✓ If one group, such as adult men or young children, seems under- or over-represented, find out why.
- ✓ Has the registration team been trained on how to identify and register groups with specific needs and persons at heightened risk?
- ✓ Have groups with specific needs been registered in detail in coordination with community services? If not, why not and how will this be done?
- ✓ Have those responsible for registration understood the criteria for unaccompanied and separated children?
- ✓ Does the population profile indicate potential protection risks for any particular group?
- ✓ Who might be at heightened risk? Why? What immediate action is being taken to protect these persons? Has a confidential, individual case-management system been established?
- ✓ Do you have data on the leadership structure? Are any groups, especially minorities, youth and women, not represented? If so, why?
- ✓ How does the socio-economic status and ethnic, linguistic and religious composition of the refugee population compare with that of the local host population?

### 3.1.2 Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis involves identifying all those individuals or groups that might be affected by a particular action and that therefore have a particular interest in participating in the planning of activities or can influence an operation. Stakeholders can be both duty-bearers and rights-holders. Stakeholders include operational and implementing partners, national and local authorities, UN agencies, members of the commu-

nity, including community leaders and traditional chiefs, civil society (local NGOs, women's groups, human rights groups), school-board members, religious organizations, and host communities and their organizations. We should document their level of influence, map their activities and work with them to plan activities.<sup>34</sup> Partnership among stakeholders is essential for establishing a community-based approach and reinforcing each other's work. Some important stakeholders are:

### **Governments of the country of asylum and country of origin**

Governments of the country of asylum and country of origin have primary responsibility for protecting refugees and IDPs and returnees, respectively. In practice, however, States vary in their ability or willingness to fulfil their obligations. In refugee contexts, they might impose restrictions, such as limited or no access to employment, education or other essential rights, or insist that persons of concern be confined to a restricted area or a controlled environment that affects the protection of the persons of concern. Some governments have established a clear framework to ensure the provision of protection, security and assistance to persons of concern through national departments, while others may be willing to extend their services as part of their responsibilities under the 1951 Refugee Convention. For IDPs and returnees, State responsibilities should be reviewed in the context of international human rights law and national legislation. It is important to work with government authorities from the outset and make maximum use of their expertise and structures to implement programmes to support persons of concern, when feasible, instead of developing parallel services.

**Line ministries can provide valuable expertise and support**

**Democratic Republic of Congo.** During the influx of Angolan refugees into Kimvula, nutritionists from the Ministry of Health guided the operational response. The Ministry of Education has incorporated peace-education modules into the national curriculum.

**Mozambique.** Health facilities in the refugee camp are supervised by the Ministry of Health, which also provides drugs and monitors the recruitment of national and refugee health personnel.

**Liberia.** The Ministry of Education leads an inter-agency group that is integrating the peace-education programme into its national curriculum.

**Chad.** In 2004, the Ministry for Social Welfare in Chad seconded national community-services staff to support the emergency operation in response to the influx of refugees from Darfur.

**Colombia.** Colombian Law provides for the adoption of measures to prevent forced displacement and for the provision of assistance, protection, socio-economic consolidation and stabilization of persons internally displaced by violence. The Ministries of Education, Health and Interior form part of the National System of Integral Attention to Displaced Persons. UNHCR works with the system to ensure equal access to and enjoyment of rights by IDPs.

**Afghanistan.** The Ministry for Rural Development and Rehabilitation and the Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons played a key role in disseminating UNHCR's community- and village-based information to other actors.

Any additional structures or services set up by humanitarian actors should be planned so that they complement national systems and can be immediately or eventually absorbed into them. This should be the norm for internally displaced persons and returnees, based on the principle of non-discrimination among nationals. We should encourage governments to establish and chair refugee education and health committees. Local authorities can also play a key role in defusing tensions with the host community and should be included in planning from the beginning of the operation.



### Ten tips on working with governments

- ✓ Remember that you are a guest in the country and are there to support and work in collaboration with the government.
- ✓ Be humble, respectful and learn from your hosts.
- ✓ Your attitude and negotiating skills are your best assets in establishing a relationship of mutual respect.
- ✓ To ensure that programmes are sustainable, assess refugee access to national services and work to incorporate their needs into government services and micro- and macro-planning.
- ✓ Ensure non-discriminatory access to basic services for internally displaced persons and returnees.
- ✓ Provide support to national structures to integrate the needs of persons of concern into existing systems, such as health and education, rather than establishing separate services.
- ✓ Analyze the impact of national legislation on persons of concern and advocate adherence to international legal standards.
- ✓ From the outset, explore all possibilities for supporting experts in national and local ministries, such as family welfare, child protection, health, education, sports, and cultural affairs, in establishing and providing services to persons of concern. The national authorities should assume the lead coordination role.
- ✓ Encourage national authorities to participate in the assessment, planning and implementation of community-based activities, while taking into consideration freedom of expression and security.
- ✓ Promote direct contact between the displaced and host communities and the authorities to facilitate mutual understanding and strengthen the displaced community's advocacy capacities.

### The host community

Host communities are affected by the influx of refugees, internally displaced persons or returnees. Mass arrivals in rural areas have a significant impact on the environment and already scarce resources. Host families, particularly in IDP contexts, take displaced persons into their homes, provide support and protection, and share scarce supplies. But the response is not always so generous: In urban areas, rents can be inflated, accommoda-

tion can be hard to find, and wages in the informal sector can plummet if the labour market is saturated. While some in the host community might see the potential benefits of new arrivals, such as being able to work and trade with the newcomers, others might see them as responsible for any deterioration, perceived or real, in their circumstances. In order to calm tensions between the two communities, maintain a continuous dialogue with the host community, keeping it informed of what is happening and supporting individuals in any way possible to address some of the challenges they face. Whenever possible, include the host community in participatory assessments and address their concerns in any humanitarian response.

### Ten tips on working with host communities

- ✓ Analyze the impact of displacement, new arrivals, additional or outstanding protection gaps and all interventions on the host community.
- ✓ Identify the host community's formal and informal leaders, including women and youth representatives, and establish contact as early as possible.
- ✓ Include the host community in participatory assessment exercises.
- ✓ Working with the host community, identify the protection risks facing the displaced population and discuss how to prevent them. Discuss the impact of displacement on the community's resources and daily life.
- ✓ Discuss plans with the host community and seek their ideas and perspectives.
- ✓ Ensure that interventions do not exacerbate tensions between the different communities.
- ✓ Encourage the establishment of a joint host/refugee/internally displaced committee to analyze the situation and resolve conflicts.
- ✓ Include local leaders in training programmes, such as on human rights.
- ✓ Where possible, ensure that the local community also benefits from services. Address host-community concerns in a timely manner.
- ✓ Monitor the dynamics between the displaced and the receiving communities.

### UN, NGO and other agencies

It is important to identify all of the UN, NGO (partner and non-partner) and other agencies that are, or could be, involved in the operation, including local community-based organizations, women's associations and human rights groups. Map their activities to avoid duplication, and work with them to ensure that any gaps are adequately bridged. Assess the agencies' strategies, capacities and contributions and the extent to which they support community participation and a community-based approach. Often, partners working in the communities are some of the best sources

of background information and can answer many questions. For example, health staff will know about practices such as female genital mutilation and forced underage marriage; education staff are likely to know about military recruitment and the situation of children with disabilities. In many cases, the mapping will highlight agencies' skills and expertise in participatory assessments. Mapping should also identify non-traditional partners, such as those in the private sector, since they might be able and willing to support development activities.

Many agencies have mandates on issues that include, but do not necessarily focus on, displacement, such as health, education, or agriculture. They can be important partners in ensuring that displaced persons are included in the national strategies agreed with governments. In some cases, UNHCR can help them advocate with the government to include protection in the national agenda.

3 Work with national and international partners and UN agencies to learn about their participatory methods and agree on coordination mechanisms, using multifunctional<sup>35</sup> teams, to support the implementation of a community-based approach. Encourage the pooling of resources and expertise to benefit the operation and strengthen local capacities. In turn, this will allow for a smooth handover to communities, national organizations and development agencies when it is time to withdraw.

UNHCR staff should participate in the inter-agency cluster approach when it is applied (see section 5.4 for further information) and promote a community-based approach and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming.<sup>36</sup>

### Ten tips on working with UN and non-governmental partners

- ✓ Focus on building mutual respect and common goals.
- ✓ Avoid overlaps, turf wars, competition and over assessment.
- ✓ Focus on bridging the protection gaps.
- ✓ Build equal relationships, especially with non-governmental partners, and seek their advice, expertise and views.
- ✓ Make sure you understand the mandates and roles of other UN organizations and partners and can clearly explain those of UNHCR.
- ✓ Promote multifunctional-team participatory assessments and learn from others how they implement a rights- and community-based approach.
- ✓ Inform the community, both orally and in writing, who is doing what in order to minimize confusion and inefficiencies.
- ✓ In situations of internal displacement, ensure that you have a full understanding of the inter-agency dynamics, particularly of the cluster approach and its principles, if it is being applied.
- ✓ Identify key civil society agencies working on human rights, children's rights, women's rights, community-based psycho-social support, and employment for young people.
- ✓ Encourage civil society agencies to extend their national programmes to areas hosting persons of concern and advocate that the needs of those persons be included in their planning.

### The donor community

Donors often operate with global strategic priorities and will focus their support on activities that clearly relate to these. When these priorities do not match those expressed by the community of concern, UNHCR should act as mediator between the two sets of interests and represent the priorities expressed by persons of concern to the donors in a comprehensive manner. This will be more feasible if a participatory assessment has been carried out to establish the community's priorities. UNHCR should facilitate direct discussions between persons of concern and donors by organizing field visits, facilitating donors' participation in assessments and planning meetings, and increasing donor interest in the operation and the

priorities of the people of concern. Above all, it is important to include donors in analyzing protection gaps and challenges, and inform them of the limitations of UNHCR's interventions due to factors such as political and financial constraints.

*In Colombia, UNHCR has a local fundraising strategy that provides regular, up-to-date information on protection and assistance for IDPs to news media, representatives of donor governments, and humanitarian agencies, through the Internet, local newspapers and television, leaflets, and posters. Individual meetings with donors and potential donors, both international and national, are organized at the beginning of the year to discuss planned activities. Throughout the year, donors are kept informed about the progress of implementation. They are invited on field missions to increase their understanding of the protection concerns and to jointly monitor the implementation of projects.*

### Formal and informal leaders

3 Identify the leaders among the persons of concern and in the host community, whether democratically elected, self-elected or informal. If they are largely male, check if there are female leadership structures, such as those of midwives, female elders, or traditional healers. Find out if there are any norms, or expected behaviours, when contacting these leaders and respect them when you do so. Take note of those individuals who might be helpful in establishing contacts with the wider community. Clarify the role and objectives of the organization and ask for their cooperation. Explain that you will soon be undertaking a participatory assessment with all members of the population and ask for their guidance and support in arranging it. Failure to meet, in advance, those people recognized as leaders by the community can result in hostility and mistrust, which might hinder the implementation of activities and undermine the relationship with the rest of the community. (Tips on contacting community leaders are provided in sections 3.1.3, “Establishing contact with the community,” and 3.2.1, “Community mapping of leadership and management structures.”)

There are often other important community figures who can be influential. These individuals might not be identified as such at the beginning of

an operation, but their influence will become apparent as the team spends time with the community.

It is important to be aware of the potential or actual presence of armed groups and different political tendencies within the community. This knowledge is basic to understanding community dynamics and will often influence the outcome of humanitarian interventions. While frequently difficult to obtain, this information must be gathered, documented and factored into all work within the community and with governments, as it is essential for providing protection.

### **3.1.3 Establishing contact with the community**

Establishing contact with the community is crucial, since these first efforts may set the pattern for the evolution of the relationship among UNHCR, its partners and the community. How to make contact with persons of concern will depend on the community and the context. There are no fixed rules; individual staff and members of the multifunctional team must use their experience, skills and knowledge to decide which groups or individuals can be approached and by whom, and which issues to raise. National UNHCR and partner staff, host communities and local authorities can be important sources of support, since they might have already established contact. However, we should be aware that these relationships are complex, particularly in the context of internal displacement, and so we should avoid acting on preconceived ideas or prejudices.

***Internally displaced persons scattered over wide areas***

*Internally displaced persons in Chechnya were placed with host families and in collective centres scattered over wide geographical areas, making it difficult for a small emergency team to undertake proper assessment and monitoring. Each collective centre was asked to elect male and female representatives who then collected data on age, sex and skills, which helped identify health staff and teachers. The representatives oversaw the maintenance of the collective centres and monitored the distribution of assistance. The partner agency working with each centre then established educational activities for the children in the centre, in collaboration with those persons of concern who had a background in education, while health partners engaged the skills of the identified health staff. Five months after the emergency began, the same system was used to assemble the representatives of the collective centres to discuss people's concerns about returning to their areas of origin.*

3 First contacts in emergency situations are likely to focus on working with the community to collect and analyze basic registration data in order to assess protection risks and the most urgent needs, including physical security, safety, shelter, health, food and non-food items, education, water and fuel. These discussions, with small groups of women, girls, boys and men of diverse backgrounds and ages, are useful starting points for determining who will do what and how assistance should be distributed. Meetings with women, including older women and girls, will provide an opportunity to discuss protection risks, access to health care and education, and to obtain information about their preferences in such matters as sanitary materials and fuel supplies. Meetings with boys can be valuable in learning about potential forced recruitment. Information about the mobility of persons with physical disabilities, any discrimination they face, and their access to services is best obtained through meetings and home visits.



**Access to women**

*In eastern Chad, UNHCR deployed a gender expert to support gender mainstreaming and initiate activities for the numerous women survivors of sexual abuse. The refugee community was conservative, and identifying survivors required both tenacity and sensitivity. By ensuring that soap was regularly distributed, which was important to the community, the gender expert managed to negotiate access to women and was welcomed by the men. This was the beginning of an ongoing interaction between the gender officer and the refugee men and women in this community, and it provided an important first step in building confidence among the women there.*

In some instances, there might be no organized groups with whom UNHCR and its partners can work. This is likely to be the case in urban areas, where displaced persons are dispersed, or when people have just arrived at a camp or a transit centre from different areas and do not yet know each other. Nonetheless, people are likely to start interacting around some common interests, such as health, religion or business opportunities. If there are no groups, the team might begin by identifying individuals who can guide the team members and help them mobilize the community.

Even in an urban context, displaced individuals are usually concentrated in specific areas. They often have access to informal networks, and there might be meeting points, such as religious and charity institutions, market places or community-based host organizations, where information can be obtained on how to establish contact with persons of concern. In both urban and rural contexts, a clear outreach strategy must first be developed, in coordination with stakeholders, based on the mapping exercise undertaken as part of the situation analysis.

In a protracted camp situation or in settlements, it can be useful to work with organized interest groups or existing community associations, such as religious groups, farmers' groups, trade associations, women's groups, youth clubs and other social groups, as an entry point into the community. Members of these groups will help explain the community structure and suggest ways of establishing contact with those who might not have regular access to humanitarian workers, such as persons with disabilities and older people.

### Ten tips on making initial contact with the community

- ✓ Understanding community practices and traditions prior to establishing contact can help identify the appropriate approach for engaging with different groups and members of the community. Focus on learning and listening, particularly at the beginning.
- ✓ Take every opportunity to discuss and meet informally with persons of concern (at the health post, during registration, at distribution points, in the queue for water).
- ✓ Those who manage to establish first contact with the humanitarian workers might become “gatekeepers”: They might not mention other groups in the community that require support if they believe resources are scarce.
- ✓ Identify an existing committee or a community-based organization through which you can access the community and begin to pass on messages. Meet the host community and the authorities.
- ✓ Be aware that messages might only reach certain groups, such as other community leaders, and not all members of the community. Develop outreach strategies with the leaders and others to ensure that everyone is informed, including children.
- ✓ Make sure that information is delivered in a language that everyone can understand, is culturally sensitive and is correctly perceived and understood.
- ✓ Arrange meetings at mutually convenient and agreed times and make sure that you arrive for meetings on time. Do not make persons of concern have to wait for you!
- ✓ First impressions matter! Those groups or persons in the community who do not meet UNHCR or its partners may draw their own conclusions about the organization based on whom the staff chose to meet with, how they behave and what happens after their visit.
- ✓ Ensure that after the first contact, immediate follow-up action is taken. Be aware of and monitor security issues, especially for internally displaced persons.
- ✓ Transparency, respect and consistency are essential for building trust, confidence and collaboration between UNHCR and its partners, including persons of concern.

### 3.1.4 Participatory assessment, expectations, time and resources

Participatory assessment is a process of building partnerships with women and men of all ages and backgrounds. Through structured dialogue with and meaningful participation by the concerned groups, we can identify protection risks and priority areas for action. At the same time, community capacities and resources to prevent protection risks and identify solutions can be jointly identified, and the responsibilities of external stakeholders<sup>37</sup> clarified. Consult with community representatives prior to undertaking any assessment exercise.



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### **Participatory Assessment in an Urban Context: South Africa**

- *The participatory assessment in South Africa was preceded by several discussions among UNHCR, NGO partners and the government. A coordinator ensured a smooth flow of information among all actors.*
- *The multifunctional team (MFT) was as inclusive as possible. Efforts were made to ensure that UNHCR staff, implementing and operational partners, and key government counterparts working in the areas of documentation, security, health and education, participated, and that a balance between genders and national and international staff was considered.*
- *Due to the vast and diverse areas in which refugees reside, four MFTs were established, each covering the main urban locations of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban.*
- *A workshop was organized before the participatory assessment to ensure that all actors had a common understanding of the process and its aim.*
- *The sub-groups were selected not only by age and gender, but also by nationality, specific needs and level of risk.*
- *Complementary meetings were organized with banks, police, refugee community leaders, the Department of Health, and refugee women's associations with the aim of identifying protection concerns and risks and discussing with the concerned authorities how they could be resolved.*
- *The findings from the four MFTs fed the discussion of the final workshop, where all the actors jointly analyzed the results and agreed on the way forward. Key areas included improving the issuance of documents and access to services, which did not require additional funding.*
- *UNHCR ensured that the concerns and the specific recommendations made at the workshop were followed up, including by incorporating them into UNHCR's and its implementing partners' 2007 projects submission.*
- *UNHCR and MFTs ensure that adequate, up-to-date and continuous feedback is provided to the refugees and that the refugees can always voice their concerns to UNHCR.*

## From “managing expectations” to real partnership

*“All we see of the humanitarian workers is the dust from their 4x4s when they drive through our settlement.”*

*“Re-establishing the equilibrium between humanitarian aid organizations and affected populations is therefore central to participation...it often comes down to one’s personal approach, mindset and attitude.”<sup>38</sup>*

It is important to realize that how a humanitarian agency and its staff are perceived will determine the nature of the relationship between persons of concern and external humanitarian workers. The image projected in the way we operate can and does generate expectations. The big white cars, the increase in rents in the towns where we set up our offices, and often our own manner of entering into relationships with people can create images of power and money.

Humanitarian workers will always have an impact on the political and power dynamics within the community. Staff must be able to recognize the importance of building trust, speaking to all, being transparent, and understanding how we influence the social dynamics within the community simply by choosing with whom we speak—or don’t speak—during our visits. Communities that have had negative experiences with humanitarian workers in the past might be reluctant to engage enthusiastically with a new group. We thus might be too quick to conclude that the community is not motivated to help itself, rather than try to find out why they respond the way they do. It is up to us to overcome these challenges.

### ***Whose expectations?***

*While conducting participatory assessments in 2005 and 2006, many UNHCR staff were concerned that they would not be able to meet expectations, and that persons of concern would present them with long “shopping lists” of expected services and assistance. But those notions are not the result of participatory processes; on the contrary, they result from a lack of true participation on both sides. The solution is not to end the dialogue and retreat to the safety of our offices, but to build a relationship of true partnership and openness with the communities of concern. Regular dialogue and feedback are very important.*

3  
Contrary to what some humanitarian workers might think, people of concern are not always expecting to have a wish list fulfilled; indeed, they might be more realistic than we are. As humanitarian workers, with the conscious or unconscious thought that “we are here to save and protect you,” we tend to focus on the list, rather than on building a partnership with people of concern in which we are facilitators, not leaders or sole decision-makers (see section 3.2.5 on community-based action planning). Not all suggestions will require funding; some are about clarifying, simplifying or changing procedures, as shown in the example on participatory assessment in South Africa above. People need to have information about our capacities and limitations, financial and otherwise, in order to make informed choices. Regular discussions and feedback will enable us to work through expectations and address short- and long-term needs.

Managing expectations means being open and honest and recognizing that persons of concern are both rights-holders *and* duty-bearers, based on a realistic analysis of their capacities. For example, parents of children with disabilities have a duty to protect the child, but efforts to uphold this obligation must take into consideration the barriers they face and the support to which they have access.

### Ten tips on creating real partnerships

- ✓ Be aware of how your own behaviour can send the wrong message. Think about first impressions: Do people see you walking around and showing an interest in their lives? Ask questions in a pleasant but serious manner; do not make assumptions.
- ✓ Explain who you are and why you are there. Have a sound reason for any meeting or activity, clear goals and explain the benefits for both those organizing it and the community. Always ask, “Why should people come to this event?” rather than assuming that they should.
- ✓ Explain what you can and cannot do, the procedures and techniques you adopt and the limitations you or the organization might face in responding to their questions and wishes. Do not make false promises or provide inaccurate information.
- ✓ The level of participation and interest is linked to the amount of information provided. Giving only partial information might lead to distrust, especially if it concerns resources, and can lead to false expectations and an inability to respond adequately.
- ✓ Ask people to discuss their protection concerns and expectations with you. Be frank about your limited capacity and be open to listening and learning about their capacities and resources. Explain delays and difficulties as they occur. Be consistent.
- ✓ Discuss how follow-up actions will be undertaken and how you will report back to the community. Clarify the links among the planning, programming and budgeting processes in appropriate language.
- ✓ Provide ample time for people to speak and ensure that your approach is sensitive to their culture. Simplicity and humility are essential for communication and participation.
- ✓ Do not immediately propose solutions to problems; let people digest the information and then lead a discussion on how to respond, the resources they can invest, and what they require from your organization or elsewhere.
- ✓ Agree with the community and partners on the ground rules and responsibilities, and establish joint problem-solving mechanisms and a system for regular feedback on progress. Conduct participatory assessment regularly, not just once a year.
- ✓ Be aware of discriminatory behaviour/attitudes by international and national staff and community workers. Think rights-holders and duty-bearers.

## Time and other resources

Building trust and an inclusive partnership with the community of concern takes time and resources. These will vary, depending on the diversity of the community, whether you are in an urban or rural setting, the geographical dispersion of the persons of concern and the size of your team.

A community-based approach is often perceived as a time-consuming activity, since it does not always have a quick and visible impact. Nonetheless, this investment in a strategy and joint partnership will enable us to deliver protection and sustainable solutions effectively, rather than simply offer quick fixes that often present problems later.

We must also remember that persons of concern are often under stress and face economic difficulties. We should therefore take into account their own schedules, working hours, and family and other obligations.

*For example, in Mexico City and England, the multifunctional teams undertook participatory assessments during the weekend, since many of the people of concern worked during the week.*

An investment of time at the beginning can save time later, such as when we work with the community to gather and analyze data rather than trying to do it ourselves. A lack of information leads to protection mistakes that can cost lives. Devote time to understanding the community's priorities, developing common objectives, agreeing on how the community wishes to participate and who will be responsible for what. If these steps are carried out properly, with respect for the pace of the community, long-term difficulties, such as security problems due to poor communication, will be avoided. In addition, joint planning will lead to better advocacy strategies with donors and host governments.

## And in emergencies?

Although rapid responses are essential during emergencies, brief conversations with different groups, such as women queuing for water, adolescents gathered in groups, or people awaiting emergency health care, can elicit information about the population at risk, including both protection concerns and the community's capacities.



*In the Tsunami response in Sri Lanka, Save the Children's shelters met international criteria for disaster-relief housing. They were clearly favoured by displaced families and they cost less than comparable solutions. The shelters were a success because the people to be housed were consulted before any construction began, and they were included in the building process.*

In the East Timor emergency IDP operation in 2006, participatory assessment was conducted through both individual and group discussions. Participatory assessment was part of a larger protection strategy and not considered a one-time exercise. In follow-up to the initial discussions, teams would return to the same IDPs every week to monitor their protection. This allowed the staff and the persons of concern to form a trusting relationship and obtain more in-depth information.



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### Ten tips on time and resources

- ✓ Discuss any approach or action with the community and other partners to see if they have better ideas and/or agree with your approach.
- ✓ Be on time! Give accurate information on where meetings will be held and how long they will last, and finish them on time.
- ✓ Check to see that schedules for meetings and trainings accommodate women's and children's schedules.
- ✓ Remember to first ask the people in the community about what you might need to find out or do. That could save the organization time and resources.
- ✓ Mapping the community's skills and capacities may obviate the need for external experts/labour, and can increase opportunities for work and capacity-building.
- ✓ Focus on solutions from the outset to avoid protracted—and expensive—displacement situations.
- ✓ Invest in participatory assessments. Once they become a way of doing business, they will facilitate planning, improve comprehensive needs assessments and support advocacy work for operations and funding.
- ✓ When writing up a project or operation plan, value and record any contributions made by the community, such as women providing food for a workshop or community members interpreting, and encourage the community to be proud of their contributions.
- ✓ Work with all other agencies and partners to identify resources and advocate solutions, such as coordinating with UNICEF on education and the provision of birth certificates, and with ILO on marketing studies and skills training.

### 3.1.5 Participatory planning

Participatory planning<sup>39</sup> brings the various stakeholders together to undertake a final analysis of information gathered through the desk review, the study of the context and the population profile, the stakeholder analysis and the participatory assessments. The priority protection risks, needs and preferred solutions are analyzed from an age, gender and diversity perspective, forming the basis of the planning exercise. Through the exercise, common

goals and actions are agreed and the different rights-holders and duty-bearers are also identified. The capacities and contributions of the community members and other stakeholders will be assessed jointly in order to determine what areas are adequately covered and what gaps exist. The final outcome should include any budgetary requirements and agreements on what efforts will be undertaken to meet these and by whom.

We should ensure that persons of concern are well represented at the planning stage and are given appropriate and timely information so that they can participate meaningfully. This will involve working with the community to identify women and men of all ages and persons with disabilities who will participate in the planning exercise. UNHCR and other agencies must also be willing to adopt transparent procedures. In some IDP situations, this might be difficult if there are security concerns with government partners. In these cases, it might be necessary to have separate planning meetings.

The participatory planning process concludes the situation analysis and links the findings of the participatory assessments to the design of the programme or project. These final outcomes will vary in format, depending on the type of organization and the goals of the participating stakeholders. For example, the result for the *community* could be *Community Action Plans*, to be supported by different agencies. The process can also support the development of a *Country Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)* and *Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)*. In all cases, the different community, government and inter-agency priorities and goals should be discussed, and broader planning exercises, such as national recovery and reintegration plans in the context of return, can also be included.

For UNHCR, the outcome will be the Country Operation Plan, which is the mechanism used by each country to present the overview of the situation, the operation's objectives, expected results and required budget. The UNHCR Country Operation Plan will normally present government, community, partner and UNHCR priorities and should not preclude support to any Community Action Plans. After the programme is designed, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes begin. Staff should keep community groups informed about outcomes and changes, both good and bad, to the programme. Their participation in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the programme is crucial.

*As we spend more time in the community, we will build stronger working relationships with individuals and representatives of all sections of the community, and they will become more familiar with the process. As a result, operational planning will improve—and so will our delivery of protection. Monitoring and evaluation require continuous dialogue with the community to know whether responses are adequate, to confirm that the community is involved in implementation, and to verify the quality of services and whether we are building on their capacities and jointly finding solutions.*

3



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### Ten tips on community participation in planning

- ✓ Invite all relevant national and local ministries, civil society actors, UN agencies, operational and implementing partners and community-selected representatives.
- ✓ Work with the community to identify the women and men, of all ages, who will represent them at the participatory planning process.
- ✓ Identify what preparation is required for community members to be able to participate meaningfully, including training on the planning process.
- ✓ Provide community representatives with the mapping of the population and agencies, and their activities.
- ✓ Share with all participants the results of the stakeholder mapping, the information analysis, and the findings from the participatory assessment analyzed from an age, gender and diversity perspective.
- ✓ Agree on protection strategies, overall objectives, activities and coordination mechanisms, including which agency will do what and the role the community will play. Identify which rights are being fulfilled and who are the duty-bearers.
- ✓ Review the objectives to ensure that these are rights- and community-based. Include targeted actions to address any identified discrimination.
- ✓ Provide the community representatives and other leaders with the outcome in summary format so it can be shared with the community as a whole.
- ✓ Ensure that community representatives have clear mechanisms for disseminating the outcomes of the participatory planning to *all* the members of the community, and that all members of the community participate in the feedback and monitoring process.
- ✓ Remember to support the representatives and other community leaders throughout the process by discussing progress, sharing information and evaluating the long-term results.

## 3.2 Community mobilization for empowerment

**Purpose:** Community mobilization is a key component of the community-based approach. Its aim is to help communities know and enjoy their rights by working 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. Communities will mobilize themselves when there is trust and confidence and when they see benefits emerging from the process.

### ***Mobilizing opportunities***

*Since mothers and children spend a lot of time in therapeutic feeding programmes, these might be good occasions to encourage women to work together to address some of the root causes of malnutrition, perhaps through agricultural projects.*

**What:** In practice, community mobilization involves establishing contact with community members and leaders, building an understanding of the social and power dynamics in the community, and bringing people together to agree on the best and most acceptable ways of working in partnership with the community. It does not always occur spontaneously; in fact, it often requires guidance from effective facilitators.

Reviewing the findings of the situation analysis will facilitate the community-mobilization process and may reveal obstacles to mobilization, such as misperceptions about other actors, distrust among different groups, a lack of expertise to support the process, lack of analysis of the root causes of problems, and/or lack of information, including about human rights, particularly women's and girls' rights. It is important—and most effective—to use participatory methods when working to mobilize the community. See Annex 2 for some useful tools and details on how to use them.

**How:** A community-mobilization process in the context of conflict, displacement and humanitarian crises can involve the following steps:

- community mapping of management structures;
- community-based representation;
- community-based protection responses and solutions;
- community capacity-building;
- community action planning;
- community action teams; and
- community-based monitoring and evaluation.

All these steps are related to each other but will not necessarily follow the order shown here. For example, we might need to strengthen community capacities in order to undertake a community-based analysis of protection responses and solutions. Our responses should be flexible and dynamic to meet the demands of quickly changing circumstances.<sup>40</sup>

***Mobilizing in the Afghan camps in Pakistan – Save the Children, Sweden***

*Community representatives were mobilized to identify children with disabilities and to create a support structure within the community to integrate these children socially. People who volunteered to help in one camp asked Save the Children to provide training. A centre was opened to assist seven children. Once people saw the improvements it made in these children's lives, other camps began demanding support to open similar centres. Some 300 male and female volunteers supported 700 children with disabilities in 45 centres. After a while, some children were able to integrate into the regular education system and others were taught social survival skills that enhanced their capacity to integrate into the community.*

Those who identify themselves as having a common interest may join together in community-based organizations. They may work together on specific activities, such as those to improve their living and economic conditions, on political issues, or to provide protection for their members.<sup>41</sup>

In urban settings, it might be helpful to raise awareness among persons of concern of the benefits of working together while promoting respect for individuals' rights and gender balance. Encouraging the formation of interest groups can assist those who are marginalized and/or have specific needs in gaining access to leadership structures and decision-making processes.

**3.2.1 Community mapping of management structures**

Every community has its own management system, structures and coping mechanisms, either traditional or newly emerging, to handle their own problems, events and politics. In displacement situations, persons of concern may have been displaced in family units, groups or villages and may maintain some management structures.

Where there is a structure, those in the community may feel protected by their traditional leaders and/or supported by host-community structures. It is important to build on these systems and to map the structure of the receiving community. For example, during the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia, the role of local authorities and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in facilitating shelter and receiving internally displaced persons was fundamental to their protection and well-being.

However, leadership structures can also institutionalize exploitation and abuse of power and status, particularly if they are not monitored. Humanitarian assistance can exacerbate discriminatory practices, such as excluding minority groups from services, resources and decision-making processes, and can lead to heightened protection risks. It can also lead to self-interested individuals assuming leadership roles by default because of the attention given them by outside actors. Entire communities might be dominated by a minority.

3 It is important to understand and then improve existing structures to ensure that the community is represented equitably and that the structures allow for the meaningful participation of women, adolescents, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Mapping and documenting the different kinds of community structures and identifying leaders with the people of concern can help give us a full picture of how the community works.<sup>42</sup> If we rely only on our first contacts and a few leaders, or only on leadership structures, problems will inevitably arise. This is not only because these might not be representative, but also because if people observe that all interaction takes place with a few individuals and other structures are ignored, accusations of corruption can arise.<sup>43</sup> Such situations can also lead to sexual exploitation and abuse among persons of concern.

To support structures that are representative of all, teams will need to spend time in the community with a wide range of people, discussing whom they consider to be leaders and why, and which structures they think function best and why. This can be done through participatory assessments. Participatory exercises offer excellent opportunities to learn about the community and can, in turn, serve as awareness-raising exer-



cises about participation, human rights, representation and leadership (see Annex 2 for practical tools).

### ***The power of leadership***

*In Chad, the leaders of one refugee camp opposed any income-generating activity since, based on an earlier experience, they believed that any such activity was the first step toward the withdrawal of UNHCR and its partners. They threatened and discouraged refugees from participating in projects and even destroyed coffee shops and other refugee initiatives. Some of those leading the negative response were from the refugee group that had been considered to be integrated when UNHCR had phased-out its programme. The lack of trust led to a tragic security incident in 2004, and highlighted the importance of good mapping and the need to spend time building trust and understanding about projects before they are introduced.*

The mapping process should include committees of elders, midwives' committees and traditional justice systems. Observing their methods of working will help us understand how to work well with the community and assist in identifying human rights issues. Through mapping, we should obtain a clear understanding about the role of each committee, its rules, how the different committees interact with each other, and how people can present problems or offer suggestions to the committees.

*The elders' committee in a camp in Tanzania used a "talking stick" to communicate: People could only speak if they were holding the stick. This procedure improved active listening, eliminated interruptions and enabled an orderly discussion. Unfortunately, only men participated in the committee, but women declared their intention to change that.*

Many displaced persons, particularly young men, arrive individually, without their families or familiar groups around them. These individuals, who usually end up in urban areas, might not have access to the kinds of structures that can help them cope with displacement. Our first step will be to mobilize these individuals around common interests.

### Ten tips on mapping management structures

- ✓ Observe the composition of groups who come forward to interact with the humanitarian agencies and note their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and political affiliation. Check with other agencies and community members whether these are the usual leaders and whether there are others you might not have met.
- ✓ Identify the different leadership styles and note those who are particularly respected, who are open and interact with all members of the community. When possible, avoid working through those who have strong political agendas.
- ✓ Work with the community to map all the different structures, noting which areas they cover. Ask different members of the community whom they turn to for support when they have problems and who might organize the response.
- ✓ Hold discussions with minority groups to assess their level of participation in leadership structures.
- ✓ Note how groups with specific needs, such as persons with disabilities, older persons and child-headed households, are supported.
- ✓ Find out from young people, particularly adolescents, how they participate, such as through education or training committees, and at what level.
- ✓ Hold discussions with groups of women about who is a leader and why. If women are not represented in leadership structures, speak with the women and with male leaders to determine why.
- ✓ Note how leaders and other structures deal with taboo issues and individual rights. If possible, use these issues as discussion points to assess people's awareness of their rights.
- ✓ Discuss with leaders whether any groups are excluded in order to understand whether there are obstacles to their participation and whether the situation can change.
- ✓ Give the information back to the community, in the form of maps and flowcharts, so that they can validate the findings and use them in their discussions.

### 3.2.2 Community-based representation

Regardless of the diverse positions and attitudes among existing leaders, it is important to find ways to work with them in order to ensure access to the wider community. It is not helpful to establish parallel structures at the leadership level, as these might be undermined by existing leaders and, in the long term, important protection issues might be pushed underground.

If the mapping exercise reveals that groups are excluded, work with partners and progressive community members to define strategies to gain the support of leaders to introduce change. Work with the community to analyze the obstacles and protection risks that under-represented groups face when they wish to have access to or influence decision-makers. Share information with partners *and the community* about UNHCR<sup>44</sup> and UN policies<sup>45</sup> so that they understand why it is necessary for us all to discuss and take action on these issues.

#### *Camp elections in Damak, Nepal*

*In 2005, refugee women expressed concern about election procedures at the camp, since people were asked to line up behind the preferred candidate in public. As a result, a secret voting system was introduced for the election of committees, from the sub-sector level to the executive level, making election procedures more democratic. In an effort to ensure that all groups in the camp were represented, caste and age were added to the selection criteria for the committees. A code of conduct was introduced in the camp-management committee to increase accountability.*

Where leadership structures are just being established, we can work with persons of concern to ensure that the structures are as representative of the wider community as possible. For example, we can advocate clear selection criteria for candidates, support the meaningful representation of women in the committee, explain why it is important for persons with disabilities and youth to be represented, and ensure that groups that have been discriminated against have the support and capacity to participate fully and equally in any meeting. If this is not the case, we should negotiate or mediate on their behalf. In an urban setting, pre-established formal committees might not exist, so it might be helpful to establish such committees to strengthen informal networks.

It is important to identify people who might be able to influence the more hard-line leaders, and encourage progressive and committed members interested in representing their group. We should enhance their skills as well as those of the more traditional leaders, encourage these people to work jointly with the traditional or established leadership, and support them in convincing traditional leaders about the benefits of sub-committees and sub-area leaders or representatives, or more representative structures, by welcoming new members into the existing leadership structure.

Where certain groups are not represented or committees are not addressing their needs, we should work directly with these groups to raise awareness about their situation. These groups can be encouraged to organize themselves separately with the aim of joining others once all parties feel confident about working together. Promote the right of children to participate, particularly those with disabilities and adolescents, and give them the opportunity to express their concerns and their priorities for action using a variety of media, including photography, drawing or art competitions, and taking affirmative action to include children with disabilities in focus group discussions.<sup>46</sup> Spend a day with children to learn about their activities and challenges.

A committee elected at the start of an operation might not be as popular or representative ten years later. The community should monitor all committees; regular, fair and transparent elections should be encouraged. Community members can help ensure that the committees remain representative by systematically recording the profile (age, sex, background) of the people who attend meetings and noting who contributes to the discussions. Afterward, they can discuss what this might mean for the rights and needs of those who are excluded. Regular participatory assessments can help monitor and promote leadership structures or committees that are inclusive and representative.

### Ten tips on supporting representative structures

- ✓ Working with the leaders and other members of the community, identify what methods are used to transmit information to all.
- ✓ Analyze with community members the ground rules for interaction with the leaders and committees, how representative they are, who attends meetings, and who speaks or feels free to speak.
- ✓ Discuss with the leaders how they promote a caring, protective environment and how those at greater risk are supported. Analyze the consequences of exclusion with the leaders and with those groups that are left out.
- ✓ Identify community values that support inclusive approaches and individual rights. Mention these in discussions to highlight the fact that rights, inclusiveness and participation are part of their approach and are not “alien” concepts.
- ✓ Support the community in defining good leadership and who in the community reflects that definition. Discuss with these people why groups, such as women and youth, are excluded and agree on strategies for change.
- ✓ Do not just promote 50 percent participation by women or the participation of young people. First prepare leaders to support these changes.
- ✓ Hold workshops on governance to ensure that the community supports fair and representative elections, including rotating and time-limited leadership, human rights, including women’s and children’s rights, and gender equality.
- ✓ Facilitate a process through which community volunteers organize fair elections. Invite observers, such as local authorities and humanitarian workers, to provide material support for the elections, and support the community in monitoring the ballot to ensure fairness and prevent intimidation.
- ✓ Be careful not to create committees for the sake of having committees. Agree on clear goals and ensure that traditional leaders support the initiative.
- ✓ Work with partners and community-based organizations to develop ground rules that are transparent, guarantee fair access for all and representative participation, and promote leaders’ accountability and their role as duty-bearers in the community.

### 3.2.3 Community-based protection responses and solutions

Given its mandate, UNHCR focuses particularly on rights-based responses to protection risks.

Community-based protection requires using participatory methods, such as UNHCR's *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, for gathering data, mapping high-risk security areas and analyzing the challenges and protection risks the communities face, including access to markets, support to older persons and persons with disabilities, how people are using assistance, whether everyone is receiving assistance, safety in school and in the community, and prevention of teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse. UNHCR's People-oriented Planning framework is helpful for analyzing, with the community, how people's roles have changed since displacement, and their access to protection, including assistance. It can also be used to identify the resources they have brought with them, how these are managed and who does what in the community.<sup>47</sup> Understanding these changes will help identify the risks that may be associated with, or exacerbated by, the actions of external actors that are not carefully considered.<sup>48</sup>

3 Normally, communities and individuals develop mechanisms to respond to most of the protection problems they face. In many situations, they will already be dealing with the problem adequately, although people might welcome additional support. We should spend time learning what the traditional methods were for responding to the needs of unaccompanied and separated children prior to displacement. If children's rights are respected, we should replicate these practices rather than introduce different systems.

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 sexual and gender-based violence. We might need to inquire discreetly about what happens to a woman who has a child as a result of rape, how the community perceives such an issue, and what the community's reaction will be toward the woman and/or child. When the community response does not meet international human rights standards, we should work with people to change their responses.

### ***The right to education***

*In a camp in Uganda, the refugee men explained that they considered it to be the children's responsibility to get up early and go digging in return for money or in-kind payment to pay for food for the family. Once the children had covered this family need, and if sufficient money was available for school fees, the children were then entitled to attend school—if they had the energy to do so, could arrive on time, and bring firewood with them for the supplementary feeding programme.*

*In Jordan, meetings with young Iraqi women revealed that they had not been to school for the last four to five years of exile. Their parents had been hoping for a resettlement solution and thus had not wished to enrol them in local schools. Five years later, their daughters were angry with their parents, as their friends in Iraq had completed their schooling.*

### ***The right to health***

*Because of a lack of treatment facilities, persons with mental disabilities were chained to one place to restrict their movement and eliminate any threat they might pose to themselves and members of the community.*

We should raise awareness about **human rights**, including the rights of women and children, with the community, using workshops and discussions to analyze the community's human rights practices: which rights are being respected and by whom. It can be helpful to compare human rights standards with community values and identify areas where they coincide. Discussion points can include: which rights are not being met and why; whether all people can exercise their rights or whether certain groups are excluded and why; and who a rights-holder is and who is a duty-bearer. This can lead to discussions about what actions should be taken, as a community, to improve adults' and children's enjoyment of their rights. Such a comparison can provide a basis for agreeing on what constitutes a protection risk and how respect for individual rights should inform any protection response.

The criteria for reviewing a community-based protection response could include the following:

**Compatibility:** Does it uphold the values of the community and human rights standards?

Coverage: Does it extend to all individuals in the community?

Comprehensive: Does it address the root causes?

***To support community responses that meet human rights standards:***

- Assist the community in developing a set of good practices from their own experience.
- Help document these practices to guide future decisions and establish precedents to which they can then refer when faced with similar situations.
- As good practices are identified, agencies should disseminate them as positive examples, promote them, and provide further support, if required.
- Find ways of extending these examples to support other areas of the community's work.
- Agree on complementary actions to bridge any gaps, such as access to loans for housing, credit schemes, and meetings with authorities.

***When community actions do not meet human rights standards:***

- Meet those individuals or groups who are adversely affected by the practice and ensure that they recognize the negative impact. Be aware of confidentiality and ensure that people will not be exposed to security problems. Do not meet with a group, such as that of women or children, that might later be targeted because of the subject matter discussed. Talk with others to find out about such practices, such as health staff, traditional birth attendants and teachers.
- Discuss alternative responses with the concerned community members and find ways to include these in future discussions and plans.
- Facilitate discussions with other community members about the negative consequences for the affected individuals and reflect on the impact on the family and community.
- Analyze where the practice came from and why it is considered important or valuable.
- Identify small entry points for change and awareness-raising, and provide support to individuals and groups who are willing to work for change.



- Ensure that people have understood which practices are unacceptable and why, and ensure that UNHCR and its partners do not support such practices.
- In cases where the community does not recognize the harm to the individual caused by the practice, UNHCR should intervene directly. This requires careful consideration to ensure that a real response is provided beyond immediate safety and/or the restitution of rights, and to avoid negative consequences for those affected and those intervening.

Sometimes, a lack of response is due to a lack of resources or knowledge of potential options. With external support, including directed discussions, progress can be made.

When traditional mechanisms have broken down because of displacement, the community might not give priority attention to groups that may have specific protection problems. When this is the case, these gaps must be discussed openly with the community so that mechanisms can be developed through which the community re-establishes its role as duty-bearer in the protection of members of the community. If there is no strong community network, as is often the case in urban areas, we should seek additional support from local associations or religious or other organizations.

Those to be identified, protected and monitored include:

- unaccompanied and separated children, especially child-headed households
- children formerly associated with armed forces, particularly girls
- persons with disabilities
- older persons, particularly grandparent-headed households
- persons with mental health and psycho-social problems
- single persons

### Persons at heightened risk

While some people in the community may have specific needs, some of these, and others who do not fall under these categories, will be at “heightened risk.” This means that the individual will have already been subject to physical violence, lack of protection and trauma and/or be likely to face such a situation in the immediate future. Without intensive monitoring

and possibly direct intervention, the person might be left unprotected. For this reason, in addition to identifying groups with specific needs, we must further filter these groups, and others, to determine who is at heightened risk. These individuals might include a girl who may be subject to female genital mutilation, a man who has been subject to torture prior to flight with no access to psycho-social support, a youth who is being pressured by the family to join an armed group, and/or a woman at risk of domestic violence. Not all persons who have specific needs are at heightened risk, however. For example, a child with a disability may be well cared for by his/her parents, or an older person may have full family support.

### Women and girls at heightened risk

Many of the problems faced by women and girls place them at heightened risk because of their status in the community and because of gender discrimination, which means that they may be shunned and excluded rather than supported. The community can help identify who is at heightened risk.

3 Research conducted by the Centre for Refugee Research at the University of New South Wales has demonstrated that in-depth consultations with women will greatly assist in identifying those **women and girls at heightened risk** in the community.<sup>49</sup> Such consultations have been conducted in India, Ethiopia and Bangladesh<sup>50</sup> and have demonstrated the importance of working with the community to understand who is most at risk and needs an urgent protection response. UNHCR's Executive Committee has acknowledged that "women and girls can be exposed to particular protection problems related to their gender, their cultural and socio-economic position, and their legal status, which mean that they may be less likely than men to be able to exercise their rights." EXCOM has also recognized that "specific action in favour of women and girls may also be necessary to ensure they can enjoy protection and assistance on an equal basis with men and boys."<sup>51</sup> Identifying women and girls at risk in a given situation requires us to identify the factors that threaten their rights. They include:

*Risk factors in the wider protection environment due to security problems; barriers to accessing and enjoying assistance and services; the position of women in society leading to inequalities; legal*

systems and/or protection mechanisms that do not adequately respect, protect and fulfil their rights; and no access to immediate support, complaints mechanisms and medium and longer-term solutions.

*Individual risk factors resulting from low status or situation in society; previous exposure, or risk of exposure, to SGBV and other forms of violence; and need for health care or other support.*<sup>52</sup>

While all persons in a displaced community may find themselves at risk, the challenge is to define who most needs close monitoring to prevent further protection incidents.

*The participatory consultations held in the refugee camps in Bangladesh in March 2006 drew attention to the particular protection risks faced by the wives and daughters of men who were imprisoned. The consultations highlighted not only how the man often faced arbitrary arrest and detention, but how the wife was threatened with rape and young daughters were threatened with both abduction and rape. The consultations further revealed that men with wives and young daughters were potential victims of false accusations by powerful local authorities, since their detention then left the family vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence. Men were thus trapped in an exploitative situation, as they feared being detained. The consultations enabled the office to identify whom it should interview to determine who might be most at risk in the community. Follow-up interviews confirmed the accuracy of the community's assessment.*

To help staff identify who is most at risk in a community, the office is developing a Heightened Risk Identification Tool,<sup>53</sup> based on research by partners.<sup>54</sup> Once staff know who is most at risk, they will need to establish an **individual case-management system** for tracking referrals for urgent action, close monitoring and follow-up to find solutions. The tool also enables staff and partners to follow up on information provided by communities on who is most at risk (see section 3.2.7 on community-based monitoring and evaluation) and to ensure that those individuals are protected. The EXCOM Conclusion on children at risk highlighted the need

for improved child-protection systems including early identification and monitoring of those children.

Serious protection problems can arise when community leaders do not work with the different members of the community to ensure that frail older persons and persons with disabilities who have no family support can be assisted in obtaining food, fuel, firewood and other basic items. It is important to discuss these gaps with community leaders and other members of the community so that collective action is taken. There is a tendency for external actors to step in and solve the problem. While this might be easier in the short term, it can create problems later, when there is no humanitarian agency on the ground to fill the gap.

It may be appropriate to assist the community in establishing structures to address certain issues. For example, as duty-bearers towards children, parents, teachers, students and the local education authorities could be assisted in creating an education committee. Such a committee could expedite the establishment of schools and encourage community ownership of the school system. Community members could monitor school attendance and determine the causes of absenteeism. This, in turn, can help prevent military recruitment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and will strengthen community-protection mechanisms.<sup>55</sup> Such a committee could also consider broader child-welfare issues, such as unaccompanied and separated children, and be responsible for ensuring that these children attend school, too.<sup>56</sup>

### Ten tips on supporting community-based protection responses and solutions

- ✓ Study with the community how it responds to various protection risks. How are these issues discussed in community meetings?
- ✓ Identify those cultural norms and values that uphold human rights and highlight these when discussing respect for individual rights. Focus and build on good examples rather than only discussing negative points.
- ✓ Determine whether the community is receptive to the work and whether we are engaging more members in the process. Be wary of working with only a few, since we will not build a broad support base or real ownership that way and it could expose people to security risks.
- ✓ Train community members in documenting good practice and participatory methods, and in data collection and analysis, if relevant. All sectors of the community should be involved, reflecting the age, gender and diversity within the group.
- ✓ Agree with the community on criteria for analyzing protection risks and responses. Use flip-charts, diagrams or photographs and leave them with the community so that the information can be discussed further.
- ✓ Working with the community, establish systems to identify groups with specific needs and community-support mechanisms for the delivery of assistance to those who are housebound, frail or unable to collect their assistance.
- ✓ Agree with the community on what mechanisms (committees, targeted support, complaints mechanisms) will be established to identify and address protection gaps and ensure support.
- ✓ Identify, with the community, which groups might be at heightened risk. **Look out for and find out more about the specific risks facing women and girls.**
- ✓ Use *The UNHCR Individual Heightened Risk Identification Tool* to identify those individuals in urgent need of protection and take immediate follow-up action.
- ✓ Advocate with authorities to assume their protection responsibilities.

In addition to raising awareness about protection gaps and working with the community to re-establish traditional responses (provided that they respect human rights), we should also invite national agencies to provide additional expertise and assume their responsibilities as duty-bearers. In some cases, local authorities will be obliged under their own national legislation to assume a formal role, such as legal guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR and others should intervene to fill gaps only *after* all these options have been explored.

### **Human rights and culture**

UNHCR's Executive Committee's Conclusion on women and girls at risk stresses that "each community is different and ... an in-depth understanding of religious and cultural beliefs and practices is required to address the protection risks women and girls face in a sensitive manner while bearing in mind obligations under international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law."

3 In some cases, international human rights standards may not coincide with the community's **norms and practices**. These must be identified early on, and team discussions with relevant community members should be initiated as soon as possible to consider solutions. A well-thought-out strategy must be developed with members of the community who may be more sensitive to the issue.

### *Traditional justice systems*

*We may find that a community has a well-established and respected system of justice based on traditional leadership, but which has no means of appeal and fails to recognize the rights of women or children. The same system might force women who are raped to marry the rapist to defend family honour, in violation of the woman's rights. Or the system might have nothing to say about the practice of fostering children in households where they are then treated as virtual slaves, or about older persons sentenced to death under traditional justice because they are accused of witchcraft. Thus, a traditional justice system may be useful for settling minor disputes within the community; but crimes such as rape or sexual abuse should be dealt with under the national legal system. In such cases, staff are expected to intervene with the authorities, leaders and other community members to discuss appropriate legal action that reflects the wishes of the survivors and respects the principle confidentiality. As humanitarian actors, we are required to respect and promote gender equality and the rights of all in our daily work.*

Identify areas of leverage, where community structures and culture may work in favour of the protection of individuals and minority groups, particularly women and children, and strengthen these. Teamwork is particularly important in ensuring that community members understand that humanitarian organizations adhere to a rights framework.

Staff are presented with numerous challenges when bringing these issues to the attention of the community and trying to find common solutions. Incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, such as female genital mutilation, might be publicly denounced to “keep UNHCR happy,” but the practice may continue “underground.” As a result, those requiring assistance are less likely to seek it and might even be punished if they try to do so.<sup>57</sup>

### **Education in Guinea**

*Refugee parents from Sierra Leone living in a camp in Guinea were sending their children to Koranic boarding schools. The children were not receiving formal education there, however; they were providing services for the teachers. As this was clearly exploitation of children, UNHCR denounced the practice as a human rights violation. The community did not agree, and the practice continued, although UNHCR could no longer locate either the teachers or the children. It was only after an analysis of the community structure and improved dialogue with the community that UNHCR was able to identify ways of working with the community through a team of imams. They were willing and able to persuade the Koranic teachers that the children had to be released for formal education. Koranic classes were then conducted in the evenings. Literacy classes focusing on human rights were also introduced. Thus, the community members became aware of children's right to education and also learned how their traditional practices could conform to international human rights standards.*

3 The universality of human rights can be challenged by members of the community on the grounds that local culture and tradition should take precedence. Some UNHCR staff have resisted taking action to promote and protect the rights of persons of concern on the grounds that it would interfere with local culture. As UN staff members, it is important to review our own attitudes and move beyond such responses as “that’s their culture.” Cultural beliefs are neither homogenous nor permanent; they are continually being renewed and reshaped, including by conflict and displacement, the media, education, the Internet, and deliberate efforts to influence values through revisions of law or government policy.<sup>58</sup>



### Ten tips on addressing sensitive issues

- ✓ Clarify from the beginning UNHCR's position on human rights. Emphasize that UNHCR's responsibility is to protect the rights of women and men, girls and boys, regardless of their ethnic, religious, social or other background.
- ✓ Do not imply that taking a community-based approach means doing everything that the community suggests or refraining from highlighting the organization's position on human rights. Begin raising awareness about gender equality and the rights of women and children at an early stage.
- ✓ Avoid appearing judgemental about community practices. Show respect, understanding and cultural sensitivity. Ensure that you are familiar with international legal standards and national legal standards that conform to international law.
- ✓ Remember that in every community there are individual(s) who are open to new ideas. Identify such individuals in the community, especially among leaders, and explore ways of having a constructive dialogue with the main decision-making body.
- ✓ The right advocates within the community are far more effective than external actors, such as UNHCR staff; but do not expose them to security risks.
- ✓ Assess the situation carefully: If an action violates individual rights, is it a response that has been developed recently or is it a long-standing practice? Discuss with the community any negative practices and seek to understand their importance to the community.
- ✓ Focus on the reasons behind the practices, the consequences for, or effects on, women, men, boys, girls, older persons and persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Jointly look at opportunities to change the practice, who should be involved, and how to proceed.
- ✓ Do not force results. Work with the community to identify small areas for change, such as alternative practices that uphold values without violating rights, rather than trying to introduce radical changes overnight. Spend a lot of time in the community.
- ✓ When working towards the empowerment and equality of women, engage men and invite them to focus group discussions on issues such as masculinity, fatherhood, gender equality, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and gender-based violence.
- ✓ Working with the community, design and organize mass-information campaigns, awareness-raising activities, training, and theatre activities to ensure that *all* community members are aware of their rights and obligations.

### 3.2.4 Community capacity-building

Capacity-building support should be designed jointly with the community and should be based on an analysis of the community's skills, capacities and objectives. These activities should be transparent so that everyone understands who will benefit, why and how those trained will support other members, and what options will be available later.

The training of community members in participatory methods, if required, should take place as soon as possible. Simple tools, such as transect walks and timelines, can be easily shared, although more analytical methods, such as ranking and problem trees, require more preparation and time.<sup>39</sup> One of the best ways to undertake these exercises is first to train community members in the methodology through practice, with the aim that they then conduct the same exercises with the community. This will create capacity in the community for ongoing data analysis, avoid institutional gaps as humanitarian workers rotate in and out of the community, and, in the long term, foster greater community participation in building representative structures.

There are three areas of capacity-building that are particularly important:

- (a) Organizational, leadership, communication, participatory and analytical skills combined with an understanding of good governance and the promotion of gender equality and respect for human rights, including children's rights;
- (b) Data collection, project design, planning, management, administration and evaluation; depending on the community, basic literacy and numerical skills might also be required;
- (c) Technical skills for specific areas, such as business-creation, micro-credit schemes, basic accounting and savings systems, agriculture, vocational training, marketing analysis and feasibility studies.

### **Organizing Community Centres**

*Initially, the centre established in Syria to support Somali and, more recently, Iraqi refugees, was used mainly to channel complaints and requests for urgent assistance to UNHCR. There was no clear management structure, and there was considerable tension among the different users. In an effort to change the dynamics at the centre, UNHCR encouraged the refugees to recruit their own team leader and assistant team leader. Everyone working at the centre received training on team-building, which helped them assume ownership of the centre and focus on serving the community. As a result, the team became stronger and members selected individuals for new managerial positions. The centre now has more than 300 persons enrolled in its activities.*

Capacity-building can take many forms, including short awareness-raising sessions, coaching of small groups, on-the-job training, assuming responsibilities and new tasks, workshops, the provision of material support, exchanging information with other groups, e-learning, Internet access, networking opportunities, and exposure to and participation in public events. These opportunities should be extended to the host community, if possible.

*In Romania, UNHCR responded to an identified communication gap among the host community, the authorities and the organization by establishing a project to empower refugees. UNHCR and NGOs supported the establishment of refugee committees in reception centres and a refugee women's organization. They provided training and material support to refugee initiatives. Those refugees who were trained as leaders were encouraged to become trainers themselves. Many of them worked as resource persons at training events.*

In assessing, with the community, members' different needs, it is important to agree on the target audience and ensure that the different groups are represented equitably. Depending on the gender-power relations, it might be advisable to organize separate meetings and training for women and marginal groups, while also sensitizing men to the benefits of meaningful participation by women, particularly in decision-making structures. Children should also participate, since participation helps build

their self-confidence and equips them better for the future. Appropriate participatory tools should be used for them.

In a community where women are not usually allowed to speak in public, establishing a 50 percent quota on committees without providing targeted capacity-building support will make it difficult for women to take advantage of these opportunities and sustain them. It might, in fact, increase prejudices about their leadership abilities. Provide training and other support as required and ensure that schedules guarantee participation by women and arrange for community childcare to support their attendance. Promote attendance by persons with disabilities and use facilities that are accessible to them.

*The Refugee Central Committee in a Sudanese refugee community was composed only of men. As UNHCR requires 50 percent representation by women, there was concern that the leaders would comply to be politically correct, but that the women would not be able to participate meaningfully. UNHCR persuaded the groups of the importance of regular elections and negotiated space for women's representation. An agreement was reached between UNHCR and the refugee leaders for four of the 15 positions to be allocated to women. To ensure women's meaningful participation, the women were given the opportunity to elect their representatives separately. They were also taught leadership skills to build their self-confidence. As there had never before been formal meetings between men and women, neither group was comfortable. UNHCR thus negotiated for four additional women to accompany the four representatives as observers—and to give moral support. The four women representatives felt more secure in speaking, as they benefited from the advice of the additional four women before taking the floor. As all the representatives gradually became accustomed to the presence of the four women observers, those women, too, were allowed to participate. Through this process, the number of women representatives was doubled.*

When organizing capacity-building activities, be sure that the selected facilitators are sensitive to age, gender and diversity issues and the promotion of a rights- and community-based approach. As much as possible, invite local or regional organizations, including academic action/research bodies, to deliver the training. If interpreters are needed, they should

become familiar with the training content and objectives beforehand. Whenever possible, encourage those who are trained to train other community members.

When working with communities to strengthen their capacities:

***Raise awareness on a rights-based approach, including the roles of the community members as rights-holders and duty-bearers.*** Clarifying these two categories will facilitate the dialogue between community members and humanitarian agencies and will help establish the ground rules for the working partnership.

***Encourage groups to chart their own course.*** Empowerment is achieved when the assistance provided supports the group's own plans and ideas. Groups and their individual members know their priorities best. The groups should establish their own agendas and contribute their own skills. External actors should provide information and support as required, provided that the activities adhere to international legal standards.

***Build strong communication skills.*** Leaders of both sexes and all ages need to communicate effectively, not just to mobilize and motivate their members, but also to communicate outside the group. This may include sharing successful experiences and information so that others may replicate them or appealing to external parties. It may even include skills to negotiate better terms with other stakeholders. Often, such skills are transferred through alternative techniques, such as theatre groups, audio-visual material and other entertainments that local people can easily understand. Avoid lectures and seminars.

***Develop action research.*** In deciding which course of action to pursue, a group needs reliable information. Since many displaced communities are unlikely to have access to such information, people may need support in devising their own research capacity and developing community-based data-collection techniques. UNHCR and partners can support this work by providing information about policies on protection, including assistance, and durable solutions, and facilitating access to a variety of local, national and international actors and related information. Such actions

will increase group awareness, allow people to make informed decisions, and promote a culture of transparency that, in turn, will foster strong leadership.

***Build awareness-raising and empowerment into all activities.*** Group meetings can be an occasion for debate about the causes of protection problems and possible ways to address these causes. For instance, functional literacy activities for women will not only enable them to read and write, but could also raise awareness about the root causes of their problems. Legal literacy classes can combine raising awareness on rights and a gender analysis of national laws with literacy skills. The radio is often an excellent medium for sharing information, and supporting groups in running their own radio programmes can be an empowering process as the groups gain visibility while offering an important service to the community.

***Foster strong leadership.*** Real leadership must be chosen by the group or community members, while promoting age, gender and diversity balance. Informed choice is the single most important factor in determining success. UNHCR and its partners can help by providing training and any advice that the community-designated leaders might request. One way to provide structured support to community representatives is through training on literacy, if needed, leadership, communication and management, covering such subjects as participatory techniques, empowerment, gender awareness and women's rights, good governance and UNHCR's policies.

***Tackle internal as well as external injustice.*** Many persons of concern depend on traditional leadership for their support and protection, particularly for organizing people to help deliver assistance. Forging unity among the different segments of the community, based on common problems and issues, and also on common solutions, is one way to overcome differences and increase participation in decision-making processes. Use capacity-building opportunities to consider situations of injustice and to build skills to address those situations, such as skills in conflict-resolution.<sup>60</sup>

***Forge alliances with other local groups.*** Large numbers of similar interest groups that join together in coalitions and networks can overcome bigger

challenges and achieve wider goals by supporting each other's struggle and action. Build connections with local associations for young people, women's rights groups, and trade unions.

***Avoid early failure.*** While groups must determine their own goals, UNHCR and its implementing partners should help them avoid actions that are unlikely to succeed, especially in the early stages. An accurate assessment of the situation must be undertaken, including consideration of such issues as: access to local employment; the potential for accessing markets to sell products produced from agricultural activities, home-based production and income-generating projects; access to government policies in relation to drinking water, trees and firewood, or land allocation; international and national rules, regulations and policies in relation to relief distribution; freedom of movement; and work permits. The community members must be fully informed of the opportunities and constraints prior to taking action. Networking with similar local groups and other experts in these fields will increase the chances of success and allow for the exchange of experiences and information. Participatory assessments can be used to evaluate lessons-learned and incorporate them into capacity-building activities.

***Balance external and internal contributions.*** External funding, whether from foreign donors or from local or national host governments and NGOs, should be understood to be a temporary measure to assist communities of concern in the initial stages of their displacement. Experience shows that most groups become stronger when they are self-reliant and independent.

***Create the context for learning through transparency and information-sharing.*** Communities need information in order to participate meaningfully. Information can be shared through public meetings, notice boards, leaflets, and public announcements. Whichever means of communication and information are used, find out how the message is interpreted and perceived; don't assume that because it has been passed on or handed over it is understood. Communication should flow both ways, from humanitarian workers to the communities and vice versa, and from community repre-

representatives to community members and vice versa. Use random checks to ensure that all community members have received information, especially those who are housebound or speak a different language from the majority. Ensure that information is child friendly and accessible to children.

### Ten tips on building capacity

- ✓ Train several community members in the use of participatory methods and ensure age, gender and diversity balance among participants. Promote women and youth leaders.
- ✓ Use all trainings to raise awareness and understanding of values, such as inclusiveness and respect for all, age, gender and diversity awareness, and the rights of children, persons with disabilities, older persons and gender equality.
- ✓ Work with community leaders to inform all members about their responsibilities as duty-bearers, particularly parents, and rights-holders.
- ✓ Working with the community, identify the different capacities and skills of community members and agree where training and other capacity-building measures are needed.
- ✓ Monitor how different people use the various training and capacity-building opportunities and whether any particular group is being excluded, such as persons with disabilities, young mothers, children, or adolescents. If so, find out why.
- ✓ Build on the creative ideas of different age groups to deliver messages while fostering their leadership skills.
- ✓ Identify appropriately skilled partners to deliver the training and ensure that they will transmit values in keeping with a rights- and community-based approach.
- ✓ Train people on developing community action plans and participatory monitoring and evaluation tools.
- ✓ Follow up on how people are applying the skills acquired and are training others.
- ✓ Discuss with the people responsible for managing community projects how they are coping and whether they require particular support or training. Promote transparent accounting mechanisms.



### 3.2.5 Community-action planning

Community-action planning is participatory planning at the community level. Depending on the circumstances, the host community and other stakeholders can be involved as well. A community-action plan is developed from the analysis of rights and the prioritization of protection risks, assistance needs, capacities and solutions identified during participatory assessments and other activities. The plan is based on what the community feels able and willing to do to address the issues identified. At this final stage of analysis and prioritization, it is important to ensure that the interests of all the different groups in the community have been represented. If not, discuss what arrangements will be made to address these concerns, especially the protection risks of traditionally marginalized groups, such as action to prevent SGBV, improving shelter conditions for older persons and persons with disabilities, or improving assistance to child-headed households.

*In discussing the available budget with a refugee community in a camp in Sierra Leone, UNHCR staff used a coloured pie chart showing what proportion of the available budget was spent on each sector, such as health, water and education. The pie chart was then used to discuss the community's priorities and determine how UNHCR should divide the budget the following year.*

While the collection and analysis of information should involve a large number of people, it may be more practical if the plan, itself, is drawn up by a smaller group, such as a planning committee or a community-action team. This group may take responsibility for developing the action plan and monitoring its implementation. This does not mean that there will not be a role for members of the community who are not on the planning committee: The implementation of the plan will depend on the wider community. The process for selecting planning-committee members should reflect considerations outlined in section 3.2.2, “community-based representation.”

The first step in developing a community-action plan is to identify the protection problems and assistance needs that have been prioritized by the community. Then, ask the following questions:

- What actions are required to deal with the problem?
- What outcome or change is desired and will this remove the cause or the symptom?
- Who will benefit? Are we being inclusive?
- Does the project support individual human rights and strengthen protection of all the community members?
- What resources are needed from the community itself and from outside?
- Who will provide these resources (material, financial, human)?
- How will the resources be administered? Who will keep the accounts?
- Who will carry out the project or activity?
- What is the timeframe for implementing the project?
- Who will monitor the project? How will the results be evaluated?

Depending on the circumstances, the community might be able to use its own resources and contact donors directly. This would indicate that community members are making decisions that affect their lives. However, when rights relating to livelihood, employment and freedom of movement are not recognized, assistance is probably necessary. Still, the way in which the assistance is provided should promote self-reliance. All stakeholders should be kept informed of resource allocations to avoid duplication or competing for funding. At the same time, UNHCR must ensure that any community-action plan adequately respects and addresses the rights of all sectors of the population. This should be monitored through close communication with the community. If some groups are being excluded, it might be necessary to intensify the activities highlighted under section 3.2.3, “community-based protection responses and solutions,” to ensure that their interests and priorities are addressed.

*In Bosnia and Herzegovina, focus group discussions with some 40 residents of a reception centre identified a variety of protection risks, including those relating to safety, health care, education, and access to legal information. A summary of the risks identified was produced for each focus group and residents then voted on priority areas. Stakeholders made a list of recommendations for future actions and jointly analyzed them. As a result, the following areas were prioritized for action:*

**Health** – *Advocacy for changes in legislation to institutionalize medical referrals and improve access to treatment and medicines. Adaptation of the medical transport services to better suit residents' schedules, and the introduction of psycho-social support.*

**Legal advice, support and security** – *Expanded counseling sessions at the centres and organized childcare, monthly tours of the reception facilities, and monthly meetings with the refugee council, manager, social worker and doctor. UNHCR regularized the issuance of birth certificates and advocated with the authorities to exempt residents from the renewal of documents. Nightly security patrols were introduced, and the role of the multifunctional team for prevention and response to SGBV was clarified.*

**Assistance services** – *Refugees were now able to select food baskets, older persons and pregnant and lactating women received appropriate food, and income-generation programmes were introduced in the centres.*

The resources needed for implementing the community-action plan will have been identified as part of the planning process. The community group will need to negotiate with external donors, the local government, and/or others for any outside resources they might need. Sometimes, joint action plans are required, such as those developed with the host community, usually in IDP situations, or with local authorities, particularly in returnee contexts.

UNHCR, its partners and other relevant institutions can support the community group in this negotiating process. They can suggest potential sources of support and advise on appropriate ways of negotiating for resources. UNHCR should also work with the community to implement the projects agreed to ensure that the community assumes ownership of the activities.

### Ten tips on supporting community-action plans

- ✓ Ensure that those involved use participatory methods and that they have the backing of the community.
- ✓ Check that the plans reflect the age, gender and diversity profile of the community. If they do not, discuss this with those responsible to find solutions. Monitor for adherence to human rights standards.
- ✓ Work at the pace of the community rather than imposing the time-frames of external agencies. Remain flexible.
- ✓ Respect the ideas/wishes of the community while providing support/ideas as required.
- ✓ Ensure the participants/leaders share the action plan with the whole community and are transparent about the use of resources.
- ✓ Ensure that participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are built into the plan.
- ✓ Raise awareness about the community's achievements.
- ✓ Advocate for support for the action plan among different external stakeholders.
- ✓ Ensure that the UNHCR or inter-agency funding mechanism provides support to the action plan if required/appropriate.
- ✓ Promote transparency and accountability among those responsible for the community-action plan.

### 3.2.6 Community-action teams

#### *Mobilizing men in the community around individual rights*

South African men, like men in other parts of the world, often act in ways that contribute to domestic and sexual violence and high rates of HIV/AIDS. Recognizing that men's attitudes and behaviours can either impede or promote sexual and reproductive health, the international NGO Engender Health, in partnership with the Planned Parenthood Association, started the Men as Partners programme (MAP) in South Africa in 1998. In 2004, the MAP network expanded its programme of workshops, coalition-building and advocacy with the launch of "community-action teams," or CATs. These small, informal groups of volunteers provide an opportunity for men and women who have participated in MAP workshops to take action on gender- and HIV-related issues affecting their communities. The initiative was designed with the dual purpose of reaching a broader audience with MAP messages and helping CAT members sustain attitude and behavioural changes adopted while attending MAP workshops. By encouraging community members to get involved and assume ownership of attempts to change social norms, it was also hoped that the CATs would improve the sustainability of the MAP programme in general.

CATs are free to adopt their own sets of goals and interventions, provided that they operate within the general MAP framework, which aims to promote gender equity, reduce gender-based violence, improve sexual and reproductive health for men and women, and increase male involvement in the treatment and care of people living with HIV/AIDS. How these aims are interpreted depends on the context within which the CAT is operating and the interests of its members. For example, in a community where unemployment contributes to gender-based violence and high HIV infection rates, organizing a career fair may be the most appropriate course of action. For a CAT composed of artists and musicians, raising awareness through performance might be more appropriate.

There are many issues that traditional community structures might not consider priorities or do not have the time to follow up. One way of fostering leadership skills among different groups and supporting change is to assist small, informal groups in setting up and developing their own activities. These community-action teams can introduce new ideas, in a non-threatening manner, on such issues as child rights and participation,

HIV/AIDS, working with men to stop violence, masculinities, environmental action, improving living conditions, and preventing and responding to specific threats to the community, such as violence against women and children. The teams have the advantage of being more flexible and less hierarchical than larger structures and are often attractive to young adults and children, particularly if they use media such as theatre and music to transmit their messages.

### Ten tips on working with community-action teams

- ✓ Identify particular issues, such as protecting the environment or reducing the consumption of alcohol, that could mobilize small groups.
- ✓ Encourage the interest groups to discuss the issue and ways of addressing it.
- ✓ Choose an activity that would be of interest to the persons of concern.
- ✓ Think small: Many small-scale activities nurture community cohesion and can lead to activities that address bigger issues.
- ✓ Train and encourage the group to conduct participatory research on the issue in their community.
- ✓ Help the group to network with others facing a similar problem, including local associations.
- ✓ Encourage the members to set criteria for the selection of coordinator(s), define the roles and responsibilities of members, distribute tasks, decide on the resources they will contribute and develop monitoring and evaluation systems.
- ✓ Help the team develop values and criteria that promote respect for individual rights, diversity and tolerance.
- ✓ Build their skills, if required, in areas such as project management and accounting.
- ✓ Facilitate, if possible, access to the “outside” world and the Internet.

### 3.2.7 Community-based monitoring and evaluation

Of all the activities we undertake, community monitoring and evaluation are perhaps the most essential, since they identify shortcomings and provide for transparency and accountability. Monitoring and evaluation also

refer back to participatory assessments for determining what is or is not working. Through regular participatory assessments with the groups that are expected to benefit from projects, timely adjustments can be made to those projects, if necessary. Failure to monitor can lead to misdirected assistance and leave room for abuse and exploitation.

**Community-based monitoring** focuses on the implementation of activities to ensure that they are running smoothly and helping to achieve immediate objectives. Regular monitoring is important because planning processes are rarely perfect and situations change constantly. Monitoring is best conducted in partnership with those who are responsible for the project, those who participate and those who should receive the benefits. Monitoring must include regular visits to those with specific needs to ensure that they are not being excluded.

*A participatory assessment in one country revealed that the school feeding programme, which had been put in place to encourage children to attend school, was, in fact, having the opposite effect on those most in need. Agreements had been reached between the community leaders, who were among the wealthier individuals in the camp, and the school director on criteria for providing incentives for the cooks, cooking materials and firewood. As a result, the poorest children were even less likely to attend school, since neither parents nor children could meet even minimum requirements. Children who did not provide firewood were sent away. Some parents were deterred from sending their children to school because they did not wish them to go hungry while others ate in front of them.*

Systems must be established early with community leaders to:

- monitor the provision of assistance to different groups, particularly those with specific needs and those at heightened risk, to avoid abuse and exploitation. (In all cases, due consideration must be given to confidentiality. In some instances, it might be inappropriate to involve the community.)
- hold discussions with the women, children and young people who are expected to benefit.
- have leaders or other community members regularly visit the homes of housebound people, child- and grandparent-headed households,

unaccompanied and separated children, and other groups with specific needs.

- regularly update UNHCR and agency staff on the status of such persons.
- receive reports on project implementation.
- solicit ongoing feedback from different members of the community on the quality of programme delivery, including the attitudes of those responsible for providing services.
- create confidential complaints mechanisms that are easily accessible to people of concern and ensure follow-up action.

Monitoring includes making necessary changes to the project or services and sharing information with stakeholders. UNHCR and agency staff should also conduct random visits to distribution sites and home visits to monitor the situation of different members of the community.

For people of concern to know what they are entitled to or what standards to measure us against, they must **know our mandate, role and policies**, who we are, and what we are doing. Therefore, we have a responsibility to provide this information clearly and in a language or medium they can understand.

### ***Who controls the cooking stoves?***

*UNHCR distributed cooking stoves to a group of families, but during the participatory assessment it was discovered that some of the families were not using the stoves. Analysis revealed that families from one ethnicity were considered to be of a “lower caste” and thus the majority prevented them from using the stoves. A lack of knowledge about the community’s dynamics resulted not only in a failure to ensure access to all, but allowed one group to use UNHCR assistance to discriminate against another group.*

**Mechanisms for enabling people of concern to present complaints** to UNHCR and partner staff confidentially are important monitoring tools. All UNHCR offices are required to establish complaints procedures as per the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the follow-up instructions to offices issued in 2003 and 2004.<sup>61</sup> The model tools provided (information sheets and complaints referral forms)



should be adapted by staff in discussions with the community and circulated in local language.

### Confidential individual case management systems

As highlighted in section 3.2.3, UNHCR offices must ensure that confidential individual case-management systems and committees are established with partners to provide a system to follow up, monitor and find solutions for those individual persons who are at heightened risk. The system for referral needs to be coordinated with the community. Any individuals at heightened risk<sup>62</sup> should be regularly visited by UNHCR and partner staff, with due consideration given to confidentiality and the potential for placing such persons at greater risk. UNHCR's ProGres database is a protection tool that can support an individual case-management system. Staff should use it to track those who have been identified as being at heightened risk. Staff will need to ensure that information is regularly updated to enable adequate and timely monitoring. These individuals might also be referred, as appropriate, to other support channels, based on agreements reached through SGBV standard operating procedures or Best Interests Determination procedures for children at risk. As well as providing immediate support, case-management committees should also consider longer-term solutions for and support to such persons, and to their caregivers and families, including the possibility of resettlement, where appropriate. While the individual case-management system is not community-based, it is an essential part of our protection work and builds on the work we do with the community.

**Community-based evaluation** is a review of the entire programme or project to see whether goals are being met and if the situation has improved. It can be conducted through participatory assessments, surveys and other methods. It is important that the different stakeholders agree which project or services are to be evaluated, with whom and when. The following questions can be used to guide an evaluation:

- What has changed for the group or the community because of the project?
- Do the changes correspond with the desired outcomes? If not, why not?

- Were the services delivered in an effective manner? Can the efficiency of procedures be improved?
- How were the project or services monitored and by whom? Does this need to improve?
- Was anybody excluded? If so, why? Was this detected quickly and addressed? If not, why not?
- Were those people at risk heightened risk and/or with specific needs contacted regularly to ensure that they had received the right support or service?
- Were people regularly informed of the progress of the project and how to access any related support?
- Were mechanisms set up to enable people to make complaints or discuss problems?
- Were the attitudes of those providing the services respectful and in keeping with organizational values?
- What have we learned from this experience? How will we apply this learning later?

3 Community-based monitoring and evaluation cannot take place unless written, oral and visual information is provided to all members of the community in appropriate languages and in a comprehensible manner. As part of their strategy to support a rights- and community-based approach, all agencies should ensure that staff carry visible identification so that people of concern know to whom they are talking, which agency they represent and what they are offering. This should be complemented with regular information bulletins, in poster form, indicating what services each agency will provide and giving details of assistance programmes.

*The team in Bangladesh took photographs in the camp both before and after an agricultural project was implemented so that everyone could see the changes brought about through the project. Showing photographs is an excellent way of prompting discussion on what has changed, the progress made, and what still needs work.*

Impact reports through regular participatory assessments are a good way of disseminating information about changes introduced and progress monitored, and of evaluating the effectiveness of projects.

*In the context of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming strategy, the UNHCR regional office in Budapest and its partners conducted participatory assessments in 2005 in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. In August 2007, the office released a report entitled, "Being a Refugee: How Refugees and Asylum-seekers Experience Life in Central Europe," which documented the improvements made as result of redirecting UNHCR's work to the priority concerns raised by the community. In Slovenia, for example:*

*An introductory course in Slovenian language and culture was introduced; Signs, in Turkish, about legal counseling were posted, and Turkish interpreters are now available for psycho-social services;*

*A house was established to provide free accommodation and intensive integration assistance for refugees for 12 months;*

*The government now offers additional language courses and vocational training for refugees; and*

*The employment agency now has officers dedicated to working with refugees and, as a result, more recognized refugees were able to find jobs.*

### Ten tips on conducting community-based monitoring and evaluation

- ✓ From the outset, provide written, oral and visual information about your projects and services, or community-action plans, including funding, where appropriate.
- ✓ Work with leaders to agree on effective community-monitoring systems, particularly for persons with specific needs.
- ✓ Establish an individual case-management system and committee to protect, monitor and find solutions for persons at heightened risk, especially women and girls.
- ✓ Undertake regular participatory evaluations of UNHCR's work and programmes using focus group discussions and other methods.
- ✓ Keep evaluation tools simple, and ensure that all the different groups in the community participate.
- ✓ Build on previously agreed plans and participatory assessment findings to note progress and identify weaknesses.
- ✓ Listen and learn, rather than “discuss or defend,” focus on the **before** and **after** to review impact and agree on steps to be taken to improve the situation.
- ✓ Discuss the results in the multifunctional team and share them with the community and partners as advocacy tools.
- ✓ Build any changes or lessons learned into the revised project. Document lessons learned and good practices and share them with other offices.
- ✓ Ensure that all staff wear identification with photos and names so that persons of concern can monitor and evaluate their attitudes and the quality of the services delivered by the different agencies.