

Action plans | Material support | Protection analysis | Risk analysis

 Global

Developing a Community Protection Action Plan

Tools and templates¹

Introduction

A Community Protection Action Plan (CPAP) can be a useful way for community protection structures (CPSs) to prioritize the protection risks they want to address. It can serve as a basis for them to identify, agree upon and plan their activities.

Process

In order to develop a CPAP, CPSs should already have completed a [protection analysis](#) identifying threats; perpetrators; people and groups vulnerable to the threats, and their specific vulnerabilities and capacities. This will form the basis for the CPAP.

CPS members and supporting humanitarian organizations can develop plans in different ways, e.g. by spreading the steps below over several meetings, or by organizing a dedicated workshop. The sessions/workshop can be facilitated by CPS members and/or staff from supporting humanitarian organizations.

CPS members can use the CPAP template (see [Annex 1](#)) to record and track their plans.

1. Prioritizing protection risks

CPS members must review the results of their protection risk analysis and choose the most important risks. As members will perceive the importance of risks differently, it is useful for participants to first decide on criteria for prioritization, e.g. the most urgent risks; or those with the biggest impact on the most community members, services, markets or schools, etc. Participants should also decide how they will choose, for example by voting (by raising hands, using stickers or ticking a list etc) or by general agreement.

CPS members should ensure that the priorities take into account risks that concern different groups within the community, even if these groups are not sufficiently represented in the CPS's membership. This point should be highlighted throughout the process – CPS members and staff from supporting organizations should pay particular attention to how power dynamics between members play out during discussions, and manage these accordingly. One option could be to break the bigger group into smaller working groups that discuss priorities in the first instance before agreeing collectively on overall priorities in a second step.

¹ This template tool builds and further expands on existing guidance document produced by Oxfam's protection teams in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lebanon.

2. Identifying actions

Problem and solution trees (see **Figures 1 and 2**) can help members identify the actions that can reduce the prioritized protection risks. Problem and solution trees layout different causes of a problem and, based on these causes, possible solutions. It is useful to make one tree per prioritized risk. CPS members can work on each tree collectively or in groups. If working in groups, the rest of the membership should be given an opportunity to comment on the work of others to ensure different perspectives are taken into consideration.

Making a problem and solution tree

1. Identify the protection risk you want to tackle and write it in the centre (trunk) of the tree.
2. For each cause of the protection risk, draw a root.
3. For each impact or consequence of the protection risk draw a branch.
4. Draw another tree and replace your risk (trunk) with a solution to it. Then do the same for the underlying causes (roots), identifying what could be done to solve them. Repeat for the consequences (branches), identifying what could be done to lessen the impact of the protection risk on individuals and the community as a whole. Example actions include advocacy, negotiation, mobilization, sensitization and capacity building.
5. The solution tree should specify which actions that CPSs and supporting humanitarian organizations are best placed to carry out, given the scope of their work and skills – and which actions would best be referred to other organizations that specialize in the respective area, e.g. conflict mediation.
6. After you finish, make a summary of the causes of the problems (and if needed of the effects) and solutions in a table (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 1: Example problem tree (fictional)

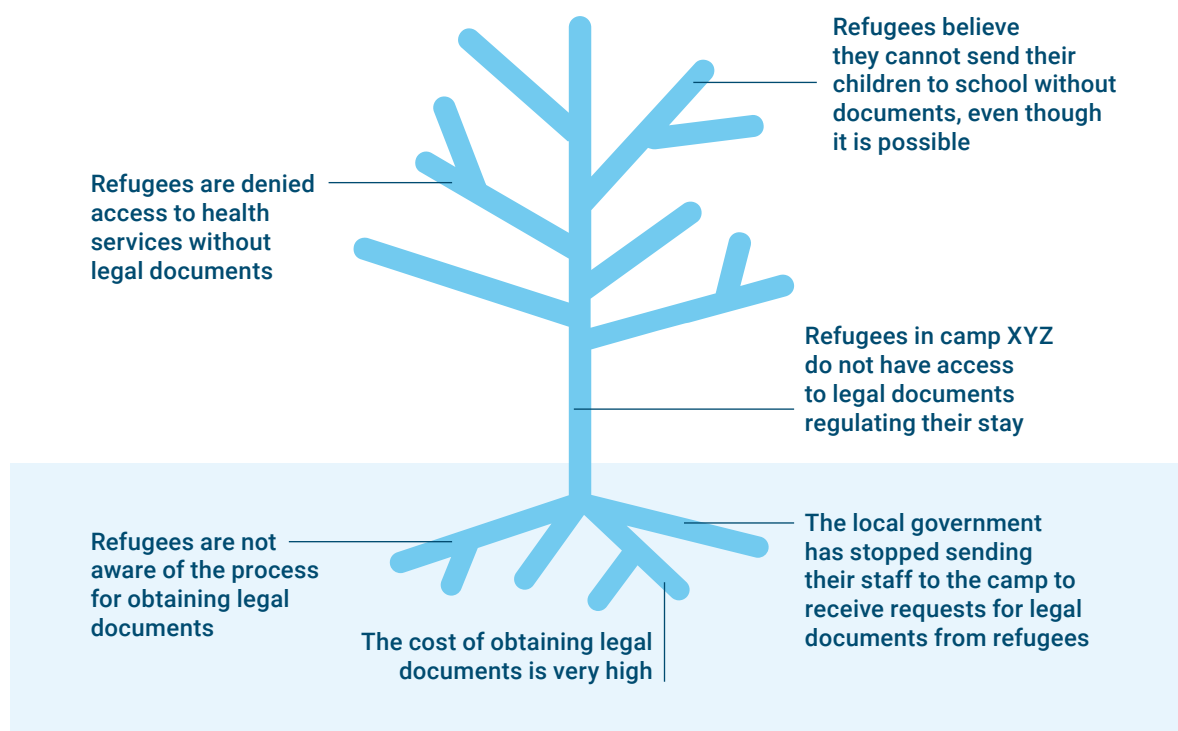


Figure 2: Example solution tree (fictional)

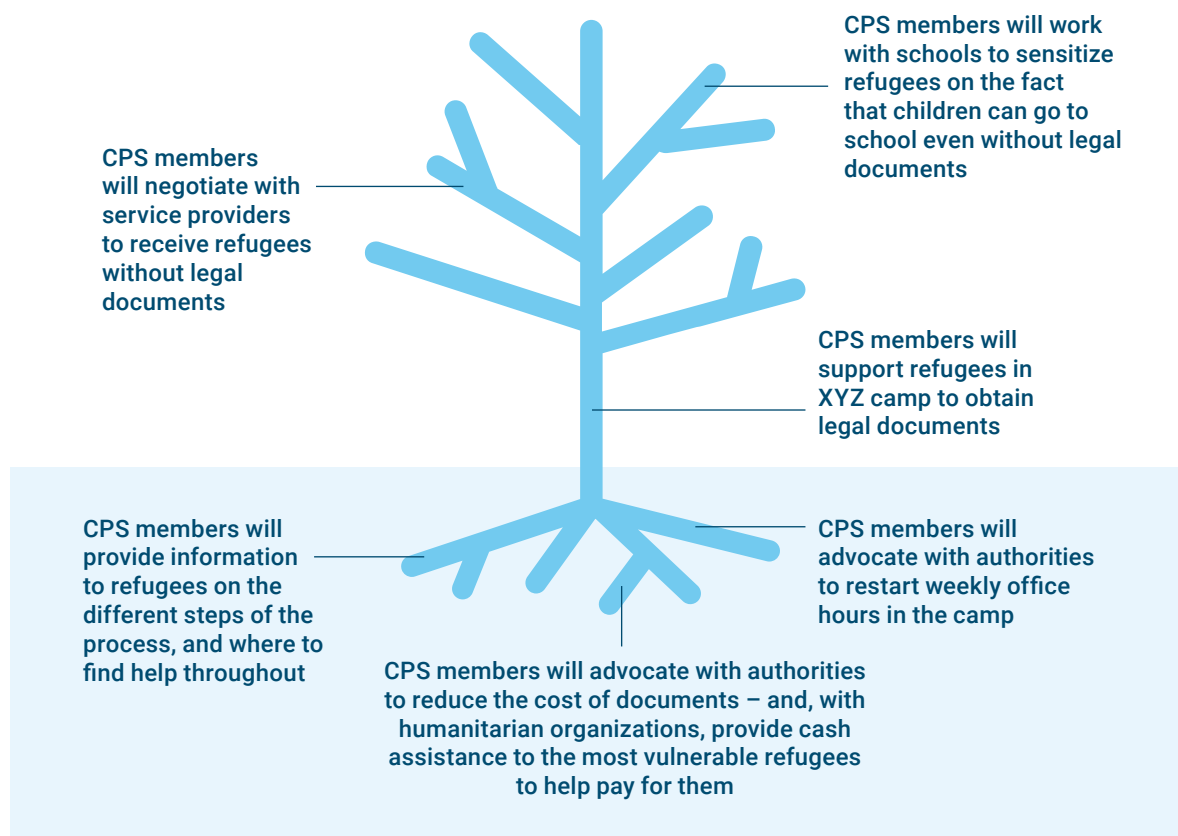


Figure 3: Table summarizing causes, effects and solutions (fictional)

Problem: Refugees in camp XYZ do not have access to legal documents regulating their stay	
Causes (and effects) of the problem	Solutions
Refugees are not aware of the process for obtaining legal documents	CPS members will provide information to refugees on the different steps of the process, and where to find help throughout
The cost of obtaining legal documents is very high	CPS members will advocate with authorities to reduce the cost of documents – and, with humanitarian organizations, provide cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees to help pay for them
The local government has stopped sending their staff to the camp to receive requests for legal documents from refugees	CPS members will advocate with authorities to restart weekly office hours in the camp
Refugees are denied access to health services without legal documents	CPS members will negotiate with service providers to receive refugees without legal documents
Refugees believe they cannot send their children to school without documents, even though it is possible	CPS members will work with schools to sensitize refugees on the fact that children can go to school even without legal documents

3. Stakeholder mapping and power analysis

Engagement with local duty bearers and community members is a key pillar of community-based protection. This must be supported by a [mapping of key stakeholders and power analysis](#), which will allow CPSs to identify who to target for which solution, understand their position, by whom they are influenced and on whom they have influence. CPS members should use their background knowledge to complete this analysis. Try to be creative when identifying how to influence duty bearers. A local official may be influenced by the leader of his religious community, so working with this religious leader in CPS activities can influence the local official's behaviour.

4. Analysing risks involved in planned actions

CPS members and supporting humanitarian organizations should conduct a [risk analysis](#) of the proposed actions. These must include risks that community members and CPS members could be exposed to as a result of the identified actions. It is critical to pay special attention to any inadvertent harm these actions might cause to women, girls and marginalized groups. For instance, in order to prevent girls from being sexually abused by teachers, CPS members might want to sensitize parents to the risk of sexual violence in schools and suggest parents keep their girls at home. However, this would deprive girls of their right to education.

5. Practical planning

CPS members need to decide the timeframe in which all of the actions will be carried out. This depends upon their relative urgency, and whether some are a prerequisite for subsequent actions. It can be useful for CPS members to identify any resources they will need for different actions. Some, such as grants, may be given by the supporting organization.

6. Presenting the Community Protection Action Plan to community members

In order to get additional feedback, buy-in and support from other community members, the CPS can present the CPAP to the community. Sensitive information should be omitted during presentations. The format will depend on how CPSs are used to interacting and consulting with community members, e.g. through community assemblies, neighbourhood meetings, discussion groups, etc.

Depending on the context, it can also be important to present at least parts of the CPAP to local authorities to help further clarify what CPSs do, engage duty bearers from an early stage and enlist their support.

Box 1: Tips for the development of a Community Protection Action Plan

If there are different structures in a community (e.g. a community protection committee and a women's protection group), it is useful to ask them to bring different plans together to ensure coherence, avoid contradiction and share ownership of the overall effort.

Updating the action plan regularly is important because risks change as a result of actions undertaken by the CPS and because of shifting contexts. Members may also find that their identified actions are not working. CPS members and supporting organizations can use protection monitoring as the basis for updates.

In mixed CPS meetings, women may not feel comfortable bringing up specific protection risks, e.g. sexual violence, forced marriage and the denial of resources. Women members of the CPS can gather in a preparatory working session at which they identify risks most important to women and girls in the community and introduce them collectively when the whole CPS is meeting to work on the CPAP.

Community protection contingency plans

Some CPSs also develop community protection contingency plans alongside their CPAP. While the CPAP focuses on actual and current risks, the contingency plan identifies potential and future risks. For example, this could include the forced relocation of internally displaced people (IDPs) from an informal settlement to a new camp. The actions that CPSs identify for contingency plans are both those that aim to prevent the threat from occurring and those that will mitigate the impact if it does happen. In the example, this could include advocacy towards local and national officials to drop plans for the relocation, or go through a consultation process with the IDPs. At the same time, they could sensitize IDPs on the importance of agreeing beforehand with family members how to stay in touch, what to bring if the settlement is suddenly closed (e.g. paperwork) or how to reorganize community groups after relocation.

In order for the contingency plan to function, the table in [Annex 1](#) should include a column with 'warning signs' that CPS members will monitor; these will allow them to decide when to start their actions. Warning signs could, for example, include increased talk among authorities around difficulties in keeping an IDP settlement in a certain location (e.g. due to security, safety, flood risk, management).

An important lesson learned from a programme in Democratic Republic of Congo is that the communication around contingency plans needs to be handled carefully – it must be made very clear that these are **potential** risks. Other community members can have the impression that CPS members (and authorities) have more information than they do about risks, and that the risks in the contingency plans are imminent, which can cause panic.

