Template tool

 Global

Selecting members for community protection structures

Introduction

Where possible, humanitarian organizations should try to work with existing community protection structures (CPSs) on community-based protection (CBP). This enhances ownership, sustainability, acceptance and trust, and lessens the risk of duplication. However, it may not always be possible to work with existing structures, as they:

- may not be representative of the community, and cannot or do not want to broaden their membership;

- may not be willing to work on behalf of all community members;

- may not be interested in tackling protection problems; or

- may be politicised, close to one party of the conflict or be co-opted by duty bearers.

In such cases, the supporting humanitarian organization should establish new CPSs. Once its roles and responsibilities have been decided together with community members, the selection of CPS members must be organized.

This tool elaborates on how to organize the selection process of CPS members, provides a generic example of a selection procedure with eligibility criteria, and gives examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo.[1]

Eligibility criteria

The community should decide on eligibility criteria for selecting CPS members. This can happen at an assembly meeting, or through separate consultations with different community groups, depending on the context and the preference of the community. Community members should agree eligibility criteria on the basis of the roles and responsibilities they have chosen through brainstorming in plenary or small groups. However, supporting humanitarian organizations should encourage essential criteria to be included (a list of example criteria can be found in Annex 1).

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1   This global tool builds and further expands on existing guidance documents produced by Oxfam's protection teams in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Somalia/Somaliland, South Sudan and Yemen.

> **Box 1: Literacy as a criterion**
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> Communities may decide to make 'literacy' a selection criterion for CPS members. In practice, however, this will often disadvantage certain groups in the community, such as women, older people or some disabled people.
>
> Rather than putting literacy as a criterion, community members should think about ways in which non-literate community members can carry out CPS activities (e.g. adapting training modules to use role plays, images etc.), and how to divide CPS tasks (e.g. implementing activities in pairs, etc).
>
> In some cases, humanitarian organizations have provided basic literacy training for CPS members both to help them with the tasks of a CPS member and as an incentive.

Selection process

Community members should then discuss and decide on the selection process. Options depend on the way the community and its constituent groups are organized. Community members could, for example, decide to appoint CPS members or elect them by collective agreement or a voting process. Where many different social groups are present, it can also be an option for community members from each group to appoint or elect one or two representatives from their group.

There are a range of options for filling different functions, such as president or vice president. Community members can, for instance, decide that the candidate with the most votes (if selection happens via a voting process) becomes president, or leave it to the newly selected CPS members to choose among themselves.

Supporting organizations

As part of their preparation for the selection process, staff from the supporting humanitarian organization should conduct a safe programming risk analysis to assess and proactively manage the risks that could arise during the selection process or for future CPS members from their role. Such risks could include:

- tension between members or communities;

- the exclusion of certain groups; and

- violence against women because of their membership.

Staff from supporting humanitarian organizations facilitate the selection process by guiding the discussions, providing guidance and support to a fair and free selection, and paying particular attention to representation and inclusion. Therefore, it is important that all groups in the community participate meaningfully in discussions – such groups include women, youth and persons with disabilities, residents, internally displaced people and refugees, and different ethnic, religious and social groups. If some groups do not have the space to speak during the meeting, humanitarian staff can invite them directly to share their opinion or break the wider meeting into smaller discussion groups. During the selection process, attention should be paid to the representativity of CPS members. The supporting humanitarian organization can use the results of its community profile to check which groups exist within the community.

Staff from the supporting organization also record the results of the selection process and share it with the community.

In the spirit of transparency, accountability and community ownership, it is important that neither the supporting humanitarian organization nor duty bearers select members of CPSs. Only members of the community should select and make informed decisions on how they wish to be represented.

Annex 1: Example procedure for selecting members of community protection structures

Location: Testville
Date: 1 July 2021

Composition of the CPS

- Number of positions to be filled: 12

- Number of positions reserved for women: 6

- Number of positions reserved for men: 6

Selection method for CPS members

- Each community group will identify among them female and male candidates as representatives to join the CPS. Candidates must confirm their willingness and fulfil the eligibility criteria identified at the community meeting, which are stated below.

- The members of each community group choose their representatives through a vote by raising their hands. Each person can vote for one woman and one man of their own community group.

- The woman and man with most votes in each community group are elected as CPS members.

- For the purpose of the selection of CPS members, the community groups that have been identified are the following:

  1. Residents
  2. Refugees
  3. People with disabilities
  4. Young adults (18–30 years)
  5. Older people (60+ years)
  6. LGBTQIA+ (NB if it is safe for them to self-identify in public)

- Each community member chooses which of the groups they feel most represented by and joins that group for the selection process. For instance, a 21-year-old refugee may decide to join either the group for young adults or the one for refugees.

Method for choosing the president, vice-president and treasurer

- Community members agree for the CPS members to choose their president, vice-president and treasurer during their first meeting using the method of their choice.

- If the chosen president is a woman, then the vice-president will be a man, and vice versa.

Eligibility criteria

CPS members must:

- Be willing to address the protection needs of the whole community.

- Be prepared to do CPS work on a voluntary basis.

- Live in the area covered by the project (this includes residents, internally displaced people, relocated people, refugees).

- Have a good rapport and trust within the community.

- Be willing and available to fulfil the responsibilities of CPS membership.

- Be able to devote the required time to activities. *(NB An indication of the time a CPS member is expected to engage in CPS activities per week can be useful to manage expectations; the time commitment should take into account that the CPS members are unpaid volunteers, so their engagement in the CPS must no prevent them carrying out livelihood activities and/or caring responsibilities).*

- Have effective communication, dialogue and consensus-building skills.

- Be able to attend trainings and actively participate in meetings.

- Be flexible, tolerant, honest and impartial.

- Be respectful of gender, inclusion and cultural diversity.

- Exhibit exemplary behaviour.

- Be willing to sign and adhere to the internal rules, including on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

- Not be involved in human rights violations.

- Not be a member of a local, regional or national authority nor other duty bearer.

Annex 2: Example of an agenda for a community assembly meeting from a community-based protection programme in DRC

Below is an example of the key stages of a general meeting to be adapted depending on the context from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Stage	Activity
Presentation of the project	- Explain the objectives of the project and the key activities - If it is not the first year, review the progress made and present any changes at the level of the project activities - Present the results of any previous evaluation, where applicable
Roles and responsibilities of the CPSs	- Explain the general role of CPSs - Stress that the project functions on the basis of voluntary and unpaid participation - Define the terms of reference for CPSs
Eligibility criteria and procedure for election of the CPSs	Establish and review the criteria and procedure for election of members of the CPSs
Election of CPS members	- Explain how you are going to organize the election (e.g. by hand or using ballots) - Remind everyone that the election will be held according to the established criteria - Ask individuals wishing to put themselves forward as candidates to do so and explain how they meet the criteria - Proceed to the election and announce the results - Ask some participants to participate in the count for greater transparency - Document the results - Later, display the results in a public place
Establish lines of communication	Clarify how the new CPS members are going to update and communicate with the community
Presentation of the exit plan	- Explain the purpose and content of the exit plan to participants - If it is not the first year, present the existing exit plan and ask for suggested amendments
Closure	- Bring the general meeting to a close and thank everyone - Record the details of the new CPS members and confirm the next stages in terms of activities - Ensure the local authorities sign a statement or report detailing the circumstances of the election of the members, with whom they undertake to collaborate.

Annex 3: Example reporting template for a community assembly meeting from the community-based protection programme in DRC

Data sheet

Project title: _____

Community: _____

Date: _____

General meeting

Objectives: _____

Number of participants (men/women): _____

Activities: _____

Meeting results

Eligibility criteria for committee members

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Candidates selected based on eligibility criteria

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Results of elections by candidate (number of votes/total number of voting members)

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Final list of elected members

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Observations, comments and questions raised by the participants

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Done in _____ , on _____ / _____ /20_____

Person in charge of the activity (name, position and signature): _____

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