



Tool

Capacity strengthening Community protection structures

Roles and responsibilities Selection of volunteers

📍 Yemen

Terms of reference for community-based protection networks

By Oxfam's Protection Team

Definition

Oxfam's community-based approach places people of concern at the centre of all decisions that affect their lives, as well as those of their family members and communities. Community Based Protection Networks (CBPN) consist of internally displaced people (IDPs) and representatives from host communities from different ages, genders and origins that are selected according to specific criteria and perform their responsibilities on a voluntary basis.

Community-based protection networks (CBPNs) provide a bridge between communities and service providers – their members act as interlocutors between humanitarian agencies and the community. CBPN members are expected to:

- provide insight into their communities' capacities and protection priorities/solutions;
- assist in the identification of persons at risk;
- disseminate information about services and programmes to their communities; and
- contribute to the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian assistance programmes.

Approach

CBPNs are part of Oxfam's strategy for community-based case identification and referral, service mapping, awareness raising and information sharing; two-way communication between Oxfam and communities; supporting communities' self-protection efforts and strengthening existing local networks; and narrowing gaps in response efforts.

Through CBPNs, Oxfam aims to strengthen community-based protection mechanisms, by enhancing and building communities' capacity to deliver key messages on protection, rights and access to services, as well as conduct advocacy, protection and development initiatives.

Roles and responsibilities

CBPN membership and assigned responsibilities remain flexible and can be modified based on the protection needs of communities they serve. As such, the roles and responsibilities of CBPNs must be developed and adapted in collaboration with community members. However, the following points could be considered:

Representation

Represent the community in an accountable manner. Consult and support the different groups in the community (e.g. women, men, girls, boys, youth, people with disabilities, older people), and establish two-way communication between communities and key stakeholders, including humanitarian actors. The networks can provide and receive feedback from the communities in relation to the humanitarian assistance and services.

Protection analysis

With technical support by Oxfam, CBPNs should contribute to the identification of gaps and needs related to protection risks in general (e.g. landmines, limited access to services, ill treatment, exploitation, etc.), and coordinate with the relevant bodies (e.g. humanitarian agencies and the local authorities). CBPNs may also be requested to assist Oxfam staff in conducting focus group discussions.

Access to services

Support their communities by referring vulnerable individuals to service providers and protection agencies as needed, or by sharing information on available services and actors, to enable self-referrals.

Action plans

Develop community action plans to better prevent, mitigate or respond to existing or potential threats. For example, action plans can include concrete measures to support people with limited mobility to access services, or describe how to conduct safety audits in schools and distribution points, etc..

Information sharing

Raise awareness and share information through community sessions, family gatherings, social activities and other community forums, as well as home visits. Enhance communities' knowledge on protection risks and how to address, mitigate and/or prevent them. For example, awareness raising can be focused on early marriage prevention, landmine risks, etc.

Social cohesion

Where relevant and necessary, CBPNs can mediate and resolve disputes between individuals. They may also work with communities to reduce tensions and maintain social cohesion between IDPs and host communities, for example.

Support community self-protection

Facilitate community dialogue in order to collectively prioritize protection concerns and support communities to develop their own initiatives.

Advocacy

Engaging and advocating with local authorities or representatives at the district level, as well as humanitarian agencies, so that they fulfil their protection responsibilities.

Do no harm

Ensure CBPN members and activities do not expose people to existing or potential threats, nor directly cause harm to their life, dignity, rights or wellbeing. To that effect, CBPN members must sign a code of conduct.

Workflow and reporting

With Oxfam's support, CBPNs should develop a work plan based on the project objectives and activities.

CBPN members should attend the network's regular and other meetings as required, and provide daily feedback, as well as weekly and monthly reports on the situation in their respective communities, with an emphasis on the identified protection risks and humanitarian needs. CBPN members should use a simple and standardized reporting format to report to Oxfam's protection team, and/or to our local partners.

Duration of commitment

CBPN members must perform their tasks as necessary through regular contact with their communities over the duration of their voluntary commitment. Oxfam, possibly with a local partner, conducts their mid-term performance reviews.

Staff's responsibilities

There must be a direct line of communication with between network members and Oxfam or the local partner. Focal points from Oxfam and partners are responsible for collecting data and reports from the CBPN members, and reporting these to Oxfam senior protection officer on a regular basis.

Criteria for membership

CBPN members are individuals from host and IDP communities willing to volunteer. On average, one network of 20 members can serve 6,000 people.

CBPN members are to be selected by their own communities, according to their own criteria. However, they must be of different ages and genders, and must represent diverse groups, including people with disabilities and representing different social groups (where applicable), and there must be an equal number of men and women in each CBPN. Furthermore, Oxfam and partners may encourage community members to consider the following criteria when selecting CBPN members:

- Voluntarism;
- Ability to work with the community in a non-discriminatory manner;
- Literacy (in some cases, where this option will limit the participation of certain groups such as women, this can be ignored);
- Self-discipline;
- Respected and well-known;
- Demonstrated leadership;
- Maturity;
- Bona fide interest in serving their community;

- Able to access the community and move freely when he/she needs to; and
- Resident in the area covered by the project.

Risk analysis

Before investing in CBPNs, a risk analysis must be conducted to understand potential risks for network members, their communities and the implementing agency/Oxfam. Such risks could include:

- tension between members or communities;
- the exclusion of certain groups;
- limited access to essential services; or
- violence against women because of their membership

Oxfam has a responsibility to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks that could potentially be caused by implementing projects or supporting CBPNs.

Capacity building

Oxfam must develop a capacity building plan for CBPNs, and update it regularly based on identified needs and gaps or areas of improvement. CBPN members must be trained in:

- protection (including identification of threats and coping mechanisms);
- gender-based violence prevention and response;
- child protection;
- humanitarian principles;
- conflict mitigation and peaceful dialogue;
- human rights;
- referral pathways;
- advocacy;
- local level coordination, communication and information sharing;
- technical outreach skills and methodologies; and
- workplans, reporting and the code of conduct.