Community protection structure internal rules

Tools and template

Introduction

Internal rules for community protection structures (CPSs) set out both the functioning of the structure and the behaviour that the community can expect from CPS members. These rules cover topics from punctuality to non-discrimination. Internal rules are important to ensure good coordination and collaboration between CPS members, thus reducing potential tensions. Given the external representation role that CPS members play on behalf of the group and the community as a whole, they should demonstrate model behaviour. This will contribute to the CPS’s legitimacy and credibility, and thus build trust in the community.

This tool gives an example of how to set these internal rules, including a code of conduct. The suggested points need to be reviewed and adapted according to context and culture, the way CPSs are set up and the type of community-based protection work undertaken in a given country. The wording and the form of the internal rules can be made more or less formal, as appropriate.

How to develop internal rules with CPSs and their communities

The establishment of internal rules should be led in a participatory way by CPSs themselves, with the participation of other community members. However, supporting humanitarian organizations may provide technical advice when requested, and/or in order to ensure certain minimum standards are met, notably on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. The rules should be defined as soon as CPS roles and responsibilities have been agreed.

The following suggested session should be adapted to each context:

1. Introduce the session

   - Ask participants to brainstorm why it is important to have internal rules. Answers may include: good functioning, coordination, avoiding conflict, determining how to deal with unwanted or inappropriate behaviour, boosting members’ external representation role, and ensuring safeguarding and safe programming.

   - Explain how you will run the session, what you have prepared and what you expect from participants.

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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. Showing example (chose one option)
   - **Option 1:** Discovering Oxfam’s Code of Conduct for non-staff. Explain that this is the code of conduct for people who work with but are not employed by Oxfam and that this can be an inspiration, look together at the content. You can prepare a game, a video, a quiz etc. to make this part of the session more active
   - **Option 2:** Give examples of different rules that could be included and explain why they would be helpful.

3. Designing a set of internal rules
   Ask the members about which topics they think rules are needed and compile them (on a flipchart, computer, or just a notepad). Do not hesitate to suggest your own ideas if the members are missing important topics, for example:
   - punctuality;
   - participation in external meetings;
   - mutual respect;
   - discretion;
   - confidentiality;
   - safe programming risk analysis;
   - risk analysis;
   - safeguarding;
   - accountability mechanisms;
   - sanctions for violations; and
   - exclusion of inactive members.
   Go through each topic in turn, asking participants to come up with a rule, or do’s and don’ts, for each. Present first an example of what such a rule can look like before moving on to the next – this can be done in plenary or as group work.

4. Agreeing on how to follow the rules
   - Ask members to decide how and where the internal rules will be kept. For instance, they can print them out or write them in a flipchart and post them in their meeting space. A template is provided in Annex 1, which could be adapted to meet this need.
   - Ask the members to decide on what happens if members do not respect the rules – penalties and sanctions should be in line with the severity of violations. Minor violations (such as being late to meetings) should not be penalized too harshly, else members may lose motivation. Confirmed serious violations (e.g. sexual abuse and exploitation, discrimination, etc.) should be addressed.

Ensure that points relating to inclusiveness, non-discrimination, gender justice, safeguarding and safe programming are included

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2 Safe programming is an approach used by Oxfam to ensure that communities can participate safely in our programmes. It requires programmes not to expose CPS members and communities more broadly to risks including – but not limited to – sexual exploitation and abuse, and other forms of gender-based violence. It also requires programmes to be conflict sensitive and uphold humanitarian principles. For further information: https://www.oxfamwash.org/en/communities/safe-programming

3 Safeguarding in Oxfam is a set of procedures, measures and practices to ensure that Oxfam upholds its commitment to prevent, respond to and protect individuals from harm committed by staff, related personnel and volunteers. In Oxfam, we focus on sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, and child abuse. For further information for Oxfam staff: https://compass.oxfam.org/communities/safeguarding-community
exploitation, extortion or political use) should lead to exclusion and potentially investigation by the authorities. Ask participants how such violations will be confirmed and how accusations will be handled. It is important to make clear the link with the supporting organization’s safeguarding policy.

5. Recap

- Ask a few volunteers to recap the session.

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Based on International Rescue Committee, *Community-Based Protection Guidance*, 2019, p. 56 (Sample CBPS TOR)
Annex 1: Template of CPS code of conduct

These internal rules have been adopted by consensus by all members of the community protection structure (CPS) in order to manage the behaviour of members towards each other and towards other community members.

All members commit to the following rules:

- All members shall be punctual to meetings and activities, or will excuse themselves beforehand if they are unable to attend or arrive on time.

- All members shall meet before taking action on anything, and will not carry out activities individually without prior discussion.

- All members shall always analyse the risks involved in carrying out any activity, and shall identify ways to mitigate these risks (e.g. risks of reprisals if publicly denouncing duty bearers' inaction).

- Only official members of the CPS are allowed to participate in exchanges with authorities or trainings on behalf of the committee; they cannot be represented by anyone else, including family members, friends or neighbours. Those who participate will be designated during a prior meeting and members will take turns to do so.

- If a member has been inactive for more than [XXX weeks/months], he/she will be asked for an explanation, and may be excluded from the committee by vote.

- All members shall respect the agreed decision-making process, which is [include here what has been agreed and for which issues, e.g. voting in plenary, simple or absolute majority or by consensus]

- All members shall use the agreed communication channels when communicating on behalf of the CPS:
  - Internally: [include here what has been agreed]
  - With community members: [include here what has been agreed]
  - With authorities: [include here what has been agreed]
  - With humanitarian organizations: [include here what has been agreed]
  - With others outside the above: [include here what has been agreed]

- All members shall recognize the model role they play in the community, and show at all times exemplary behaviour including, but not limited to, the rules below. Acts or behaviour that go against the spirit of the CPS’s protection work will not be tolerated.

- Members shall not engage in any sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, nor child abuse. They will do everything in their power to prevent these from happening, and will use their best endeavours to report any such behaviours by others to [name of supporting organization] or through recognised confidential reporting systems in every case.

- All members shall show each other mutual respect and act respectfully towards other community members, authorities, service providers and other people they interact with.

- Members shall not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, gender, culture, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion, social status, disability or other grounds.

- Women and men in the CPS are equal and enjoy the same rights and obligations, and CPS members shall act in a manner that supports and promotes such equality.

- All members shall provide support to anyone who requires it, regardless of their own interest during the activities of the CPS.
CPS work is always and, in every way, voluntary. It is strictly forbidden for any member to instrumentalize others or ask for tips, incentives, bonus or any other benefit.

All members shall treat sensitive information with confidentiality and discretion. Sensitive information about a person or family should be discussed with the person or family, and only be shared in view of addressing their need with other CPS members and external actors with their informed consent.

All members shall not work on behalf of politicians, nor use their membership in the CPS for political gain.

All members shall not be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during CPS activities.

If members do not respect these rules, they will be asked to explain themselves to the rest of the members. They will jointly identify ways to help the member in question respect the rules. Repetitive violations can result in the suspension or exclusion of the member in question. Serious violations of the rules (e.g. discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, extortion, use of position for personal or political gain) will lead to the immediate exclusion of the member in question and criminal investigations where necessary.

CPS members and community members can report inappropriate behaviour and violations of the internal rules to [include here what has been agreed, e.g. complaints and feedback box, complaints and feedback focal points/committee, dedicated phone number]

Disputes within the CPS shall be settled amicably. If amicable efforts fail, a dispute resolution committee will be elected by all CPS members to settle the dispute.

These rules will be reviewed every [six months/year] in a meeting with all CPC members.

Signatures of CPC members