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📍 Democratic Republic of Congo

Theory of change and structure of the community-based protection programme

By Oxfam’s protection team

The founding principle on which the community protection programme is built is communication between members of the community and local authorities, all of whom are informed about what human rights mean. This dialogue can contribute to ensuring the protection of the communities against all forms of deliberate violence, coercion and deprivation. To achieve this objective, the programme aims to facilitate change in three main areas of results:

Rights and actions	Engagement	Informed referrals
Community protection structures effectively contribute to the prevention of and response to protection risks within communities.	Local civil and military authorities are more receptive and sensitive to the communities’ protection problems and needs.	Community members are better informed and can access protection and care services.

Community protection structures

In order to bring about these changes, Oxfam and the national civil society partners facilitate the implementation of [community protection structures \(CPSs\)](#). These include a **community protection committee (CPC)**, made up of six men and six women, elected by their peers. In parallel to the CPC, a **women’s forum (WF)** is put in place, made up of 15 members, all of whom are women. Two of these women are also part of the CPC, thus ensuring a constant link between the CPC and the WF. The WF is established as a parallel structure, because women often need a separate space in which they can discuss protection issues in complete confidence and confidentiality, before discussing them with the CPC. This framework also allows them to tackle protection risks specific to women and girls. In order to reach and involve nearby villages, 20 agents of change (AoCs) are identified from among these communities in order to better incorporate their protection needs and concerns into the CPSs’ work.

Rights and actions

The members of the CPC and WF and the AoCs receive training in several stages throughout the programme. This training covers basic protection issues, such as human rights. Gender analysis is integrated into the training, for example via exercises that facilitate discussion about traditions and the distribution of roles and tasks between women and men.

Following the initial basic training sessions on human rights, Oxfam and its partners provide support to enable the identification of protection risks specific to the context, which forms the basis of the [community protection plan \(CPP\)](#). According to the risks identified, certain actions are planned, and for each action a risk analysis is carried out. The actions identified may include holding a meeting with local authorities to discuss and/or negotiate solutions, or carrying out sensitisation activities with the communities. A meeting of the WF takes place before each CPC meeting, and the issues raised at this meeting must be incorporated into the CPP.

Engagement

The CPP is shared with the local authorities, who have been identified by the CPSs via a map of key actors. Engagement with the authorities aims to promote a constructive approach, rather than a confrontational one. **Mixed meetings**, monthly coordination meetings between CPSs and members of the local authorities, constitute a forum for discussion and interaction about the threats and risks identified. During each meeting, the CPSs share the CPP and reports of abuse, and discuss what actions to take with the authorities. These actions may take place at the local, territorial, provincial, national or international level. Below are some examples of actions taken at different levels:

Local

In the village of Cantine in 2011, the WF identified that the marriage registration fees of \$25 were too high for many couples. This puts women in a position of vulnerability, since without the marriage registration, women are not legally recognised (e.g. to inherit from their husbands). The women put pressure on the authorities and the fees were reduced to \$10.

In Lushebere, a member of the WF did not have access to her inheritance after the death of her parents. After receiving training on inheritance, she discussed the matter with her brothers and managed to convince them to give her part of the inheritance (a plot of land).

Territorial

In Masisi, the members of the advocacy network carried out an advocacy action aimed at the territorial authority concerning marriage registration fees, which were reduced from \$50 to \$10. In a single month (March, Women's Month), 80 marriages were registered.

In Masisi, incursions by armed groups were observed by members of the advocacy network. They carried out advocacy actions aimed at the commander of the Masisi regiment of the armed forces. The latter decided on a military position for the armed forces along this axis, which considerably reduced such incidents.

In Kitshanga, members of the advocacy network carried out an advocacy action concerning repeated cases of robbery in Rugarama by armed groups aimed at the commander of the armed forces based in Kitshanga and at the district colonel of police, requesting daily mixed patrols by the armed forces and the police. The mixed patrols were organised in zones formerly affected by incursions by armed groups along the Kitsanga-Mweso-Rugarama axis.

Provincial	Illegal toll barriers between Eringeti and Kainama made the cost of transporting merchandise between the two towns very expensive. Thanks to advocacy work by the Protection Cluster, supported by Oxfam, the number of barriers was reduced from seven to two.
National	In Kabare in 2009, elements of the 14th brigade of the armed forces were cited in cases of extortion of the local population. After this issue was identified by the CPC, the attempts made by local peace activists and the activities of local media yielded no conclusive result. Oxfam then raised the issue at the national level with the head of state and the brigade was ordered to leave the places in question.

Informed referrals

In addition to identifying the risks and threats facing local populations, the CPSs receive help in order to map local care and protection services (e.g. medical, legal, administrative, traditional and psychosocial services). The map identifies where the services are, what services they provide, the conditions for accessing them and any additional information (e.g. if there are fees to pay or if the service is free of charge). The CPSs are supported in carrying out local sensitisation activities in order to encourage victims and survivors to self-refer. Two members of the CPC are also designated as focal points responsible for referrals, and are able to provide information and guide individuals towards the appropriate service, where necessary.