



Access to services Capacity strengthening Material support Service mapping

📍 Lebanon

Service mapping by and for the community

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The ultimate goal of community-based protection is self-protection – i.e., that communities are able to implement measures to ensure their own protection. This is not easy to achieve, especially in an ever-changing context like North Lebanon. For example, the emergency response to the crisis in Syria was prolonged to last over five years due to the high poverty rate that already existed in the city of Tripoli, and because of clashes between residents of the Bab-al-Tibbaneh and Jabal Mohsen neighbourhoods between 2005 and 2015, which left the area in need of considerable support.

The mix of refugee and hosting communities in this urban setting created a sensitive environment, which forced us to constantly adapt our approach to community-based protection.

Service maps are an essential tool for community members, both Lebanese and Syrian. They identify all the services available from service providers, NGOs and UN agencies – and describe how community members can access them. This includes supplying the contact details, addresses and eligibility criteria. These service maps are regularly updated by UN agencies, and made available at their centres and online. NGOs in Tripoli use these maps, and add services they find missing, and provide them to the communities they work with.

However, on several occasions, the community structures we work with, particularly women's groups, mentioned that the available service maps did not respect key elements of 'protection mainstreaming',¹ because not all community members enjoyed meaningful access. This was due to the presence of army check points, the lack of legal residency permits for most Syrian refugees, and the high cost of transportation. This pointed to the need for better-tailored tools that reflect the reality of accessing services by community members.

They also explained that interagency services are not usually community members' first choice. Instead, they will first try the nearest service provider – even if their services are limited – because accessing them is much easier and more affordable, compared to those provided by UN agencies and international NGOs.

To improve the available service maps, the Utopia team encouraged community structures to add service providers that local community members could access that were not included in the initial maps. Representatives of these community structures knew exactly what to look for, and updated the maps precisely and effectively. They started surveying their networks to know where people go when they need a service, and identifying gaps in the available maps. The preliminary data

¹ Protection mainstreaming is 'the process of incorporating protection principles... in humanitarian aid', which requires taking into consideration four elements: (1) prioritising safety and dignity, and avoiding causing harm; (2) meaningful access; (3) accountability, and (4) participation and empowerment. Protection mainstreaming is the responsibility of all humanitarian actors. See Marie-Emilie Dozin, Gergey Pasztor, Adrien Muratet, David Murphy, and Yasmine El Behiery, Protection Mainstreaming Toolkit, Global Protection Cluster, available at: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/GPC-PM_Toolkit-ENG-screen.pdf (accessed in November 2020).

they collected was rich and comprehensive. They gave this to the Utopia team, who added it to the service mapping tool.

The service providers that had been missed included local dispensaries, private clinics, religious and political entities, schools, institutes, charities, community-based organizations, independent individuals and private firms. After this, the responsibility of updating the service maps was moved from the protection team to the community structures. It was agreed that the information collected by the community structures about their services was very useful, and adopting this method would add value to Utopia's community-based intervention.

Utopia provided training sessions on data collection and entry, safe identification² of persons in need of services and referrals, and communication. In addition, Utopia provided the community structures with stationery, recharge cards and transportation allowances. Since then, Utopia team has included service mapping in its project proposals, along with the capacity strengthening and incentives supporting it.

This experience demonstrates the important point that communities know better what is best for them, and that our tools are worthless without being tailored to fit their life needs.

2 Safe identification refers to the process of identifying individuals in need of services and referring their case safely – notably, by respecting the principle of 'do no harm', collecting only necessary information, and obtaining their informed consent before sharing it with relevant actors.