



GUIDANCE ON COMMUNITY BASED PROTECTION NETWORKS (CBPN)

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Introduction

Conflicts not only leave women, men, boys and girls in dire needs for immediate humanitarian assistance and services, they also impact their ways of **coping with threats** on longer term. It is necessary to provide urgently needed services and assistance to prevent and respond to immediate threats including violence, coercion, deprivation and abuse. But it is also equally important to work with the affected populations in a manner that **preserves their dignity and recognizes their potentials and capacity**.

The affected populations have the right to **fully participate in decisions** that affect their lives, and the humanitarian actors have the **responsibility to facilitate active participation and engagement** of the affected populations. This can be accomplished by adopting community-based approach. 'The approach that emphasizes the community's self-determination and capacity, but does not remove the need for formal protection mechanisms or imply that communities are expected to be completely self-sufficient'¹

Community-based protection is **a process** that can be facilitated by the protection actors, but it must be **owned by the people themselves**. A Community Based Protection Network (CBPN) is a mechanism for communication and information sharing related to the humanitarian situation between the conflict-affected and internally displaced persons and humanitarian actors. The CBPN composed of a group of conflict-affected and IDPs from different age, gender, backgrounds and origins that are selected based on specific criteria and perform their responsibilities on **voluntary** basis. The network also should include members from the host community where applicable and needed.

Objectives of CBPN (might differ from one area to another):

1. Represent the community in an accountable manner

Consult and support the different groups in the community (women, men, girls, boys, youth, people with disability, elderly and others), and establish two-way communication between the humanitarian agencies and local stakeholders on one side, and the communities on the other side. The networks can provide and receive feedback from the communities in relation to the humanitarian assistance and services.

2. Identify needs, threats and gaps and coordinate with the humanitarian agencies

¹ Understanding community-based protection, UNHCR 2013



Identify collective and individual protection cases (CP, GBV survivors, victims of conflicts and other vulnerable people such as elderly at risk, people with disability, etc.) and refer them to protection agencies. In addition, identify gaps and needs related to humanitarian assistance in general (mines risks, limited access to certain services, mistreatment, exploitation, etc.) and coordinate with the relevant bodies (humanitarian agencies, local authorities, etc.)

3. Plan and implement community-based initiatives

Respond to community based protection threats by implementing preventive, mitigating and responsive measures such as development of community action plans to help people with limited mobility to access services, conduct safety audits in schools and distribution points, etc. they can also coordinate and advocate with humanitarian agencies and local stakeholders to improve the safety of the community.

4. Raise awareness and share information

Conduct awareness raising events and campaigns on relevant topics, such as early marriage prevention, mines risks education, etc. And share information on available services and assistance with the community.

5. Support social cohesion and mediate

Where relevant and needed, the CBPNs can mediate and resolve disputes between individuals, or work with the communities to reduce tension and maintain social cohesion between IDPs and host communities for example.

Guiding principles in working with CBPNs

- Do No Harm

Supporting and working with CBPNs should not create harm to its members or the communities they represent. Gender sensitivity must be applied throughout the whole process. Separate sessions with women/girls and men/boys are recommended where threats are discussed and prioritized (women will not feel comfortable to discuss their issues in front of the men and vice versa). The teams working with CBPNs must have females and males staff. In addition, basic analysis of what might divide or connect the community must take place prior to establishing the network, and actions must be put in place to mitigate any potential risk.

Establishing and supporting the formation of CBPNs is a process that involves engagement with local authorities and local power holders (Aqils, sheikhs...etc). Therefore, understanding the power dynamics and relationships between all the actors is key element to avoid creating harm to the communities and members.

- Inclusiveness

The CBPNs must be inclusive to all the groups in the community they represent. Women, adolescent girls and boys, people with disabilities and minorities (religious, ethnic or tribal) might be easily left out during the formation of the networks. The exclusion of any group will affect the



ability of identifying the threats which this group is facing, and this will consequently hinder the efforts of mitigating, preventing and responding to these threats.

- **Participation**

The agency working with the CBPNs must ensure active participation of their members in all the steps. The members should never be informed about decisions affecting their communities, they must own those decisions in order to sustain the network. Women's and girls' participation can be limited due to cultural aspects. Agencies must take additional steps to improve women's and girls' participation without creating additional burden or risks to them.

- **Voluntarism**

Members of CBPNs must be primarily motivated by the idea of helping their own communities. No one must feel forced to join the CBPNs and the membership should be totally voluntarily. While incentives, such as visibility materials (vests, t-shirts, etc.), transportation fees (where relevant), refreshments, food, telephone credits and stationary can be provided during the meetings/sessions/events, it is not recommended to maintain payments to the volunteers.

- **'Process not project'**

Establishing and effectively sustaining CBPN is a process that requires experience, resources and patience. The minimum time needed is between 6 to 12 months, and the work with the CBPN should not stop by the end of the project. Same network can be engaged for different projects and programs. For that, agencies must invest in time and process-oriented staff and commitments. In addition, there is no one fits-for-all methodology to be followed nor there is one global result expected in working with CBPNs. The context, protection threats, and challenges faced by the communities, must inform the process.

- **Capacity building**

This is a two folds principle. Agencies must invest in building the capacity of both, the staff involved with the networks, and the members of the networks themselves. Staff must at the minimum be trained on how to identify and handle protection threats, community engagement, facilitation skills, psychological first aid, mediation and other protection topics and approaches as relevant (CP, GBV prevention and response, The members of the networks on the other hand, must receive training sessions that help them to maintain the network such as planning, ways of information and dissemination, threats identification, threats mitigation, local level coordination and advocacy, and others.

- **Collaboration**

Agencies supporting CBPNs in same areas must collaborate and coordinate together. Standardizing the incentives, training materials and ways of how the networks can coordinate with local stakeholders for example, can be very useful to sustain the networks.

Implementation strategy (with timeline)



Designing and implementing community-based protection approach is not always a linear process. The implementing agency should be continuously monitoring and adapting the approach. Changes in the context, security situation, or displacement for example, can affect the protection priorities and threats identified by the networks and consequently the planning and the implementation of the plans. The following are the main implementation phases:

- **Risks analysis (Before establishing the CBPN) (Annex 1)**

Before investing in CBPNs, risks analysis must be conducted to understand potential risks against the network members, the communities they represent, and the implementing agency. Issues related to tension between the members or communities, exclusion of certain group from participation, limited access to the community center, and violence against women because of their membership are examples of potential risks that could take place. Implementing agencies has the responsibility to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks that can be possibly caused by supporting CBPNs.

- **Formation and membership (first two weeks)**

The CBPNs will reflect their communities' protection priorities and challenges, therefore these communities must be involved in choosing who will represent them. Building a transparent and good relationship with the communities, and especially the power holders (local leaders, local authorities, etc.) is a cornerstone in facilitating the formation of the networks. In average, one network can be formed for population of 6,000 individuals and each network can have 20 members in total. Other criteria can be considered as well:

- 50% females and 50% males
- Respected and well-known
- Willing to volunteer and help the community without being paid
- Can read and write (in some cases where this option will limit the participation of certain groups such as women, it can be ignored)
- Demonstrate leadership
- Representatives from the people with disability
- Representatives from different social groups (where the community is diverse)
- Maturity, credibility and bona-fide interest in serving IDPs/host community
- Able to access the community and move freely when he/she needs to

- **Code of conduct (third week)**

It is imperative to agree on certain principles and rules to govern the relationship between 1) the members of the networks, 2) the network and the implementing agency and 3) the network and the community it represents. It will be much easier if at the beginning, issues like how to resolve conflicts between the members of the network, how to maintain membership in the network and



others are discussed and agreed on. Transparent discussion about what is accepted and what is not accepted and ways of resolving misunderstandings is a key factor in maintaining good relationship between all the parties of this approach. Members must also read and agree on the code of conduct in Annex 2.

- **Identification and agree on protection priorities (Ongoing process – but it can be implemented for the first time between the fourth and the eighth week and updated based on needs)**

Protection priorities and threats can be overwhelming in the context of Yemen. It is critical to manage the expectations of the networks and to have honest discussion on the implementing agency limitations and capacity. Although the priorities must be conveyed by the networks themselves, but the implementing agencies can also highlight protection threats that they are concerned about in that community. Age, gender and diversity perspective must be adopted while agreeing on the priorities (different groups might have different priorities). It is also important to keep in mind that these priorities are dynamic and they can change at any time in the life cycle of the CBPN.

- **Planning and Implementation (ongoing process – after eighth week)**

Clear action plans must be developed and planned to guide the implementation of the activities or initiatives. The networks members must recognize the responsibility they have towards their communities and this should be the driving factor for them to implement the plans. The process requires close support from the implementing agencies to provide guidance and resources to enable to networks in addressing their protection threats and implement the activities or tasks.

- **Capacity building and Monitoring (ongoing throughout the whole process)**

Specific skills and trainings might be required to respond to the identified protection priorities. Together with the networks, the implementing agencies may develop capacity building plan and support the networks in implementing it and acquiring the needed skills. The implementing agencies must also monitor closely the process and adapt their intervention accordingly, the best way in doing this is by engaging the networks and establishing two-ways communication relationship.



ANNEX 1 – Risk Analysis Template

Risks	How the risks can be reduced or managed
Risks to networks members: (risks related to <u>access/dignity/safety/causing harm/accountability/participation/inclusion/ empowerment</u>)	
Risks to communities represented by the CBPNs:	
Risks to organisation:	



ANNEX 2 – Code of Conduct

All members of the Community Based Protection Network should understand and agree upon the following principles and regulations. Following is the suggested Code of Conduct to be signed by each CBPN member.

I WILL:

- Treat all IDPs, host and conflict affected community without any discrimination against any group or individuals
- Respect cultural differences, religious affiliations amongst IDPs, host and conflict affected community
- Report any concerns related to protection.
- Exercise due care in all matters related to my volunteer dedication
- At all times be transparent in my actions.
- Be accountable of my deeds and do not place myself or others in any position that might cause harm.
- Speak up when I observe behaviors that cause concern.
- Treat reports and information related to protection concerns of individuals or community with high confidentiality.

I WILL NOT:

- Use my position for personal benefits
- Engage in behavior that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade IDPs.
- Request any provision or favor from IDPs in return for assisting them.
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with IDPs.
- Hit or physically assault IDPs
- Engage in any relationships with IDPs that may be measured as exploitative or abusive.
- Behave aggressively or inappropriately with IDPs.
- Photograph or video any incidents without the consent of the IDPs.

I am (Name) _____, understand and will comply with all the principles stated above.

Signature _____ Date _____