

GUIDANCE NOTE ON COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION IN UKRAINE



●●●● BACKGROUND

- In Ukraine, internally displaced people (IDPs), host communities as well as conflict-affected people are experiencing the consequences of the sixth year of an active conflict. In order to contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion, a growing number of Protection Cluster partners are implementing community-based protection (CBP) programmes. This guidance note aims to promote a common understanding of CBP amongst the humanitarian and development community, shares good practices from Ukraine and suggests key actions for effective community-based protection programming.

What is community-based protection?

- Community-based protection is a continuous process that seeks to engage communities meaningfully and substantively in all aspects of protection programming, as analysts, evaluators and implementers. CBP therefore uses a community-based approach to programming, which emphasizes the community's self-determination and capacity without removing the need for humanitarian actors to provide more formal protection support.
- CBP facilitates the empowerment of communities to obtain their rights safely and with dignity. It involves adopting a rights-based approach that recognizes that all IDPs and conflict-affected people are rights holders. Through CBP, crisis-affected communities and the actors who assist them can identify the most serious protection risks, explore their causes and effects and jointly decide how to prevent and respond to them. Priority should be given to working with existing community-based structures before creating new structures that might negatively impact the sustainability of CBP interventions.
- Community-based protection recognizes that some protection problems may pre-exist a humanitarian emergency and may be exacerbated by it (e.g. domestic violence; neglect of persons with specific needs, and exclusion and discrimination).

Why does it matter?

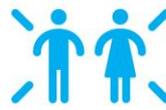
- The link between communities and protection is mutually reinforcing. Working through community mechanisms enhances protection and enhanced protection in turn strengthens communities.
- CBP generates effective and sustainable protection outcomes and improves the lives and resilience of affected communities by identifying protection gaps through consultation and strengthening local capacity.
- Understanding communities and putting them at the core of programming contributes to the 'do no harm' principle and ensures that programmes do not inadvertently leave people and communities worse off. Engaging IDP and conflict-affected communities in their own protection promotes decision making and also helps to achieve durable solutions.

●●●● GOOD PRACTICES FROM UKRAINE

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT

- Several organizations in Ukraine are implementing projects grounded in community-based protection. They often combine several tools to support and empower communities. These include the allocation of grants to organize consultations at community level, buy project supplies or support community entrepreneurship. Other organisations focus on **capacity building, mutual learning** within communities and facilitating networking between IDP communities to promote sustainability and further empower communities to engage with local authorities. Specific activities for building community capacity at all levels include strategic planning, team-building and community mobilization so that communities can be agents of change in their own development. Another

People benefitting from community-based protection activities in 2020



23,407 persons reached



35% older people



23% residing in non-government controlled areas

Source: Protection Cluster Quarterly 5W (January-June 2020)

example of empowering communities is engaging people to identify priority needs and supporting them in the implementation of **peaceful coexistence projects** and **community support initiatives**, which can include medium-scale infrastructure repairs proposed by the conflict-affected population or local authorities to increase access to public services, as well as **community centers** for IDPs and the local population.

TRUST BUILDING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

- Engaging volunteers and hiring staff from conflict affected communities is a good practice observed in Ukraine. Some national Protection Cluster partners are strongly rooted in local communities, which contributes to building trust, improves identification of protection needs and increase resilience of the community. This brings services such as home-based care, social accompaniment and case management closer to the people in need.

COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT TO OLDER PEOPLE, ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND GBV SURVIVORS

- A growing number of organizations are providing tailored support to protect older people from neglect, help to alleviate isolation and reduce psychosocial distress caused by the conflict. Provision of **home-based care** to older people with limited mobility and without family support living near the contact line is a good practice. Staff and volunteers can help with household chores, improving safety and accessibility of home environments, assisting with basic exercises and provide items such as walking frames, crutches and canes to improve mobility and independence. Another example is **engaging with local authorities** to identify the need for community services and providing grants to unemployed working age people who are willing to undertake these tasks. Authorities share the prioritized activities which may include assistance to older people, cleaning public spaces and maintenance of community centers. This can improve livelihoods opportunities for people who have lost jobs due to the armed conflict and cannot find employment, while also addressing the needs of the community in terms of access to services, which may not otherwise be provided by the local authorities due to lack of funds. Several organizations also run **community centers for older people** living in conflict-affected areas, including people with disabilities, where people can gather to meet and socialize with other people in their community, rebuild or maintain community networks and friendships. In these spaces they can take part in group activities and access other types of humanitarian assistance, such as group protection counselling, psycho-social support, explosive ordnance risk education, access to internet facilities and computer literacy classes for older people. While visiting community centers, older men and women have an opportunity to socialize and exchange information, contributing to their resilience and psychosocial well-being. The participation of older people is vital, both as volunteers and active members of communities representing and protecting their group interests. In addition, using the peer-to-peer principle helps to develop a more inclusive environment in each community, strengthen ties within the community and further build the capacity of older people.
- Successful community-based protection programmes in Ukraine have also included supporting GBV prevention and response by improving conditions of GBV shelters and providing training opportunities for members of IDP-led organizations to strengthen their capacity to identify and assist GBV survivors. These projects have shown

sustainable results, with IDP-led organizations being aware about existing services, as well as being able to provide support to GBV survivors where local authorities may not be in a position to do so.

- Community-based protection programmes have also focused on working with ethnic minorities by supporting small scale projects with a capacity development element, such as building community centers or supporting youth sporting activities, which can empower the minority community as well as strengthen peaceful coexistence with the host population. It is important that prior to embarking on such projects, organisations ensure that their staff learn about the culture and traditions of the minority that they will be working with. Where possible, organisations can also engage interlocutors from the minority community, who can help in establishing trust between protection organisations and the community.

MUTUAL LEARNING AND SHARING OF PRACTICES

- Another good practice is where IDP community-based organizations engage IDP communities around one topic in order to share their experiences and practices. The topics are identified collectively based on needs expressed by the communities and taking into account the capacities developed by other IDP communities. These can be as varied as ‘social work with children and youth with disabilities in conflict-affected areas’ or ‘how to apply for funding from the local government for the contracting of social services’. Participants in the knowledge exchange apply and go through a selection committee that assesses their motivation to contribute to their community. Following knowledge exchange, participants are encouraged to share a report summarizing the main learning points, and to use this information in their communities.

●●●● KEY ACTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

- Community-based protection is a process rather than a project. Partners who want to elaborate a project grounded in community-based protection are encouraged to take a number of steps. The steps recommended below are based on the UNHCR protection policy paper, ‘Understanding Community-Based Protection’ and interviews with Protection Cluster partners in Ukraine. Each of these steps can be further operationalized and supported by tools from the Safety with Dignity manual and the Community Tool Box.
- For specific guidance on community action for child protection, please refer to the Global Guidance by Plan International and seek additional guidance from the Child Protection Sub-Cluster.

1. Learn about the community you want to work with. Make visits and spend time with the community. The time spent on developing trust, and understanding the capacities of the community, is part of the work of implementation. Trust will be enhanced if the same staff members are regularly involved. Dialogue and consensus building skills will be needed to move community discussions from ‘wish lists’ reflecting individual needs to a shared analysis of community needs. It is important to promote sustainability from the start, foremost by promoting a strong sense of community ownership.

2. Select community counterparts with care. Although it is essential to keep all the community informed through open meetings, public events and social media, for practical reasons you will have to work with community representatives. Sound selection depends on having a good understanding of the community and of the various groups that compose it as well as the relations between them. Ask members of those groups who they consider to be their leaders and, even after the selection, regularly confirm the community is satisfied with their representatives. The latter might need additional capacity building to perform this role. Building capacities of community representatives also increases community ownership and therefore sustainability of the programme. To ensure long-term engagement of communities and their representatives it is important to clarify from the onset what is expected from community members in terms of contributions and volunteering.

3. Balance priority needs that the community identifies against organisational capacity and your judgment as a protection professional. IDPs and host communities are likely to prioritize protection needs differently and amongst each group, women, men, boys and girls, adolescents, older people, people with disabilities,

CBP IN ACTION : KEY RESOURCES

[Understanding Community-Based Protection](#), Protection Policy Paper by UNHCR

[Safety with Dignity](#), A field manual for integrating CBP across humanitarian programs by Action Aid

[Community Tool Box](#) by Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas

[Community action for child protection](#), Global Guidance by Plan International

minorities etc. In addition, other priorities might emerge. Meeting community priorities and respecting cultural sensitivity will also contribute to stronger ownership and therefore to greater sustainability.

4. Undertake proper planning and analysis before engaging. One of the most important benefits of dedicating time to understanding the community and building its capacities is that together you are more likely to correctly identify both protection issues and possible sustainable solutions. When undertaking background analysis, look for changes in family structure, access to services, status of older persons, community and public support systems, risks for different groups, social roles, in particular of women and men, participation and leadership. Part of the analysis is also to map existing services or initiatives for IDPs and conflict-affected people that are already provided by the community, local authorities or other stakeholders and to support and work with these. It is important to ensure that all members within communities are granted equal access to essential services.

5. Identify and take into account existing community self-protection measures. Every community that faces threats engages in individual or collective self-protection. These measures may be effective or not, formalized or not, but it is important to identify and understand them before introducing external protection measures. Some coping measures are harmful and it will be important to replace them or mitigate their effects as comprehensive protection measures are developed with the community.

6. Train yourself, colleagues and partners. Community-based work is demanding and requires strong capacity building, facilitation and consensus-building skills. Staff need to be equipped with strong analytical skills to assess potential protection threats as well as advocacy skills. They also need capacity to understand and work in and with diverse communities (rural/urban, religious, ethnic minorities, political sensitivity, gender roles etc.)

7. Promote advocacy for sustainable change. Advocacy is stronger when evidence-based and presented by those who have personal exposure to the issues raised. It is important that communities have the capacity to bring their day-to-day concerns and needs to relevant policy and decision makers. The community may need a third party to facilitate mediation and act as a bridge between them and decision makers. It is also the role of protection partners to support state and local authorities and to highlight the needs of the community. They might also need support to facilitate dialogue with the communities.

8. Give attention to monitoring and evaluation. Making oneself accountable to the community for results affirms the importance of the partnership and demonstrates confidence and respect for the community. Sound monitoring implies that challenges and outcomes were clearly identified and analysed at a start of a programme and in close consultation with the community.

