GUIDANCE ON REFUGEE COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMMING

A. INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

The community-based approach empowers communities to understand, and access rights and services in safety and dignity. Through this, crisis-affected communities and the humanitarian actors who assist them can identify a community's most serious problems and protection risks, explore their causes and effects, and jointly decide how to prevent and respond to them. Community-based approach is not just a matter of consulting communities or their participation in rapid assessment or information-gathering. It is a continuous process that engages communities as analysts, evaluators and implementers in their own protection and solutions.

B. COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH IN THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CONTEXT

Following a series of multi-agency, multi-sectoral community consultations and assessments¹, the following are some of the main recurring issues in findings:

• **Access to services.** Correlation between protection risks and the level and quality of access to basic needs and services. Women, female youth, older persons, pregnant women, children and persons with disabilities were the most affected by gaps in site planning and services (e.g. lighting, WASH, Health, Distribution Modalities), which compromise their security daily, affect their health and lead to potentially harmful coping mechanisms.

• **Access to information.** Refugees complained of having limited information on services and that information came predominantly from male traditional leaders (e.g. Mazhis), with the elderly and mobility-challenged persons feeling isolated. Focus group discussions and face-to-face interactions were the preferred methods of communication followed by SMS.

• **Lack of accountability.** Little information on where to report incidents or complaints on service delivery. Allegations that the current community leadership structures may be involved in practices where money is exchanged for services have been reported.

• **Community ‘imposed’ and culturally sensitive protection reactions.** Due to a combination of social norms and the congested, insecure camp context, women uphold the purdah, while youth girls are advised to stay home. In absence of perceived adequate clothing, women end up remaining in the shelter, resulting in restricted access to daily camp activities (markets, distribution sites, assistance and soliciting information) and dependency on others.

A refugee Community Outreach programme can contribute to improving access to information, assistance delivery and the overall protection environment in the Camps, with the added dividend of building on the skills, capacities and knowledge of the wider community, hence empowering them to play a central role in resolving issues and improving their living conditions.

¹ CODEC, Save the Children, TAI, UNHCR Rapid Protection Assessment Bangladesh Refugee Crisis, 15 October 2017; UNHCR and partners’ Community Assessments, November 2017; see also findings of OXFAM’s Rapid Protection, Food Security and Market Assessment, November 2017; Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) and the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) Bangladesh Rohingya Camp Age and Disability Inclusion Rapid Assessment Report, December 2017.
C. OBJECTIVES OF REFUGEE COMMUNITY OUTREACH INITIATIVE

PARTNER AGENCIES
- Improved knowledge of the community
- Information on population profile and protection concerns of communities
- Continuous presence in communities
- Credible programming
- Sustainable interventions
- Identification and engagement of most-at-risk groups and individuals

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
- Pride, self-esteem and dignity
- Empowerment of all groups
- Incentives (material/non-material)
- Capacity building, skills and personal development

WIDER COMMUNITY
- Accessible and timely information on programmes and services available
- Timely and culturally appropriate response/referral of individual and community level issues and concerns
- Opportunity to feedback/lodge complaints
- Community cohesion
- Peaceful coexistence with host community

BETTER PROTECTION OUTCOMES THROUGH PROGRAMMES THAT:
- Are informed by accurate and up-to-date information on protection concerns
- Identify and build on the capacities, knowledge and skills of communities
- Promote accountability towards persons of concern
- Empower communities to monitor the quality and impact of programmes and provide feedback and suggestions
- Build mutual trust and transparency through efficient reciprocal communication and partnership

D. MODALITIES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Selection and Recruitment
1. The pre-selection of community outreach volunteers can be carried out through:
   - Identification of proactive community members during focus group discussions or visits;
   - Coordinating with existing community structures (e.g. traditional leadership);
   - Asking persons of concern to put forward candidates that enjoy trust and legitimacy in the community; and/or
   - Self-identification of candidates willing to provide support to others in need.

2. Eligibility should be assessed on a diverse range of factors to promote participation of as many groups as possible (men, women, the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities) and avoid marginalisation of certain cross sections of the community (e.g. people with limited education or work experience), Potential and commitment to serve the community, team-oriented mentality,
communication and mediation skills as well as willingness to engage in challenging work should be important determining factors.

3. Due to the highly sensitive and challenging nature of the work, candidates should go through a formal recruitment process, which includes at least one interview.

4. Successful candidates should be extensively briefed, understand and sign an agreed Terms of Reference (outlined broadly below), setting out their roles and responsibilities, as well as a commitment to respecting a Code of Conduct (see Annex 1).

Terms of Reference
The following are general Terms of Reference of Community Outreach volunteers which may be adapted according to the Sector or specific areas they serve in.

Capacity Building, Coaching and Monitoring

- Participate in training and information-sharing sessions with organisations, agencies and service providers.
- Deliver basic information from Sectors, organisations, agencies and service providers to the community about key lifesaving issues and existing programs.

Individual Refugee Assistance and Support

- Undertake door-to-door/home visits and provide:
  - basic individual counselling on services and other important issues; and
  - safely identify the most at risk refugees in need of urgent assistance, and refer heightened risk cases to service providers for case management.
- Provide individual support or mobilise community support to persons with specific needs who require regular follow-up at their homes (especially for those with limited mobility)
- Establish networks between outreach volunteers to facilitate referrals.

Raising Community Based Issues, Proposing Solutions and Promoting Social Cohesion

- Identify and report community-level risks and needs, as well as suggest solutions.
- Conduct small scale surveys and FGD to elicit views from community on thematic issues.
- Conduct field level advocacy with organisations and service providers on improvement of service delivery and facilities
- Coordinate activities with other community mobilisation initiatives: e.g. Community Groups, Camp Committee to ensure identified concerns of all groups are duly highlighted while maintaining independence of action.
1. In order to effectively capitalise on existing abilities while ensuring adequate skills, phased capacity building may be conducted in the following manner:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Training</th>
<th>Field Practice and Mentoring</th>
<th>Specialised Training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Roles and Responsibilities:</strong> what is expected of them.</td>
<td>1. Introduce service providers in the field ('service walk').</td>
<td>1. Identify and train volunteers who may have skills and potential to work in specific areas e.g. SGBV awareness raising.</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Conducting Outreach:</strong> what to focus on, who to target, what information is required, how to obtain and present quality information, how to safely identify and make referrals.</td>
<td>2. Facilitate linkages with other refugee volunteers in other sectors.</td>
<td>2. Training of Trainers (ToT) for peer support activities - include information collection, analytical and reporting skills.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Interpersonal Skills:</strong> communications, self care.</td>
<td>3. Shadowing, on the job coaching, refresher training sessions.</td>
<td>3. Introduce Focus Groups Discussion and Community Consultation Modules to enhance their involvement in participatory assessments.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Cross-cutting Principles:</strong> human rights approach (mitigating discrimination, ensuring equal access); respect for age, gender and diversity; protection principles ('do no harm').</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Code of Conduct:</strong> confidentiality, accountability, PSEA.</td>
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2. Community Outreach is a process (not a ‘project’) requiring extensive human resources and long term investment. Organisations should ideally:

- **Recruit one or more dedicated staff to manage the outreach portfolio,** depending on the size of the project, fostering trust with refugee volunteers and consistency in implementation;

- **Establish practical tools to facilitate safe data recording, timely referrals and analysis.**
  Regular follow up with the volunteers is key in ensuring proper and timely identification of people with specific needs, and that issues are appropriately addressed either at community level or through case management;

- **Work very closely with the volunteers:**
  - Daily presence is probably required for at least the first six months, to mentor, reinforce basic principles and work through challenges together;
Organise weekly ‘blended’ debriefing and mini-workshop sessions to continuously respond to capacity-strengthening needs, provide encouragement and pick up on signs of stress or possible security concerns;

Conduct monthly review, contemplating ongoing coaching activities with special attention for volunteers who have not been as participative (e.g. due to gender bias or academic exposure);

- Create safe communication channels between the volunteers (e.g. through establishing social media groups where permissible) to facilitate flow of information and raise morale;
- (Depending on turnover) be prepared for ongoing recruitment (and thus re-training). In addition to careful selection of candidates, consulting the volunteers periodically on their expectations and aspirations may help mitigate ‘drop-out’ (see also below on incentive and support costs).

Sustainability and Ownership

1. Community Outreach is by and large a volunteering programme which promotes community ownership in protection intervention and solutions. Thus, any support costs or incentives should take into account the nature of the work, sustainability of the programme, local cost of living and wages, existing practices within the community and among similar programmes.

2. Commonly used support costs include cash payments, transportation and communication costs or material support (i.e. mobile phones, visibility) but can also include training, certification, honours, awards and prizes, social events and public recognition.

3. Community Outreach volunteers are not normally expected to ‘work’ on ‘full time basis’- allowing them time to attend to their families or participate in self-reliance /income-generation activities in the camps (e.g. cash for work, camp-based skills training). Volunteers are however expected to commit to the established numbers of hours per day/per week, and not undertake any other activities which pose conflicts of interest or interfere with the independent execution of their duties.

4. Incentives should not undermine existing community practices performed on a volunteer basis. It should be harmonised for all volunteers working with different humanitarian actors, to prevent constant volunteer turnover (and retraining) or cause tensions between volunteers and/or host communities.

Accountability and PSEA

1. Community Outreach volunteers are not the organisation’s or agency’s staff, but are expected to abide by established Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference.

2. Disciplinary measures (reprimand, suspension, dismissal) should also be clearly communicated to the community outreach volunteers for breaches ranging from:
   - performance issues: absenteeism without prior communication, punctuality;
   - behaviour affecting the credibility of the programme: disrespectful or abusive attitude, deliberate and fraudulent misrepresentation, money in exchange for services;
   - criminal acts: extortion, harassment, violence which may entail reporting to local authorities;
   - sexual exploitation and abuse-related acts which will require response in line with PSEA protocols.

Self-Care, Safety and Security
1. Community Outreach volunteers work very closely with the community and are likely to be perceived as being affiliated with humanitarian organisations and service providers. Thus, some of the risks and challenges they are likely to face include:
   • Psychological fatigue from listening to the problems of the community;
   • Expectations of themselves and from the community to resolve problems;
   • Demands from refugees for ‘privileges’ of ‘special favours’ e.g. vis-à-vis assistance; and/or
   • Threats and risks to their person or life, if privy to sensitive protection issues: e.g. corruption, criminality in the community, especially if perpetrated by influential people.

2. The following may assist in mitigating the challenges and protection risks faced by Community Outreach volunteers:
   • Ensure that they understand what they can and cannot do; and that they manage their expectations and that of the community accordingly.
   • The programme should not place volunteers at risk (e.g. by requesting that they do protection monitoring, investigation of incidents or case management); and that specific referral and response protocols are in place when a volunteer is exposed to, or comes into contact with sensitive protection information.
   • Introduce them and clarify their roles, responsibilities and activities, to all stakeholders; authorities, traditional leadership, the wider community and service providers. Equipping them with an identification badge and other visibility items can facilitate and legitimise their work.
   • Incorporate a module on self-care into their training and establish peer support amongst the volunteers.
   • Encourage and commend community outreach volunteers on what they can and have achieved in terms of successfully referring refugees for assistance, awareness raising of important issues and bringing key protection concerns to the attention of organisations.
   • Promote a culture of community support with or through other community mobilisation initiatives; e.g. inclusive Community Groups, and representational camp governance to strengthen synergies in implementing community solutions.
   • Organisations and partners should provide close supervision to ensure oversight of community outreach activities and promptly identify and address problems.
ANNEX 1
(SAMPLE) Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct for Community Outreach Volunteer

Roles and responsibilities
- Deliver information to the community about the existing services, programmes and important news affecting them.
- Conduct home visits, identify refugees with specific needs, provide them with necessary assistance (including emotional and practical support), and refer them to the services through existing referral pathways.
- Report heightened risk cases to (organisation) that are in need of urgent support or assistance.
- Establish links between (organisation) and the refugee community and highlight the needs and concerns of various groups.
- Identify and report community-led solutions to risks and needs, as well as suggest solutions.
- Build networks with other volunteers in other sectors to facilitate solutions and responses.

Code of Conduct
- Demonstrate the desire, willingness and commitment to support refugees, especially those in need, without fear or favour.
- Provide services without any financial returns or other forms of remuneration from refugees (including gifts or ‘tokens’).
- Pledge to interact with the refugees fairly with respect and dignity.
- Respect confidentiality and ensure that informed consent is obtained before sharing any information from refugees.
- Contribute to building a harmonious environment, based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding.
- Perform duties and conduct private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest.
- Treat refugees equally without discrimination, as well as in accordance with the principles and standards of (organisation) and its Code of Conduct.
- Refrain, prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of refugees and other persons of concern, including those of a sexual nature.
- Refrain from engaging in any sexual activity with children below 18 years old.
- Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of (organisation) and other humanitarian agencies.
- Respect work/volunteering regulations (e.g. punctuality, request for leave).

Support Costs and Merits
- The Community Outreach Volunteer (COV) is a volunteer with (organisation) and will be provided proof/identification that he/she is a volunteer with (organisation).
- COV will be given support costs to cover the phone calls, transport expenditures and other incidentals to assist in their volunteering activities.
- COV will benefit from trainings organised by (organisation) and others to facilitate their activities.

I, the undersigned, declare that I understand and agree to the Roles, Responsibilities, Code of Conduct and Merits outlined above.

Name:  
Signature:  
Date: