



GUIDANCE ON COMMUNITY CENTERS

JULY 2018

“In situations of forced displacement, the ties which hold a community together are often severely weakened or broken. Open and regular interaction between individuals and groups, their shared values and interests, and their means of minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization, may need to be supported to regenerate during displacement... Community centers are safe and public places where women, men, boys and girls of diverse backgrounds can meet for social events, recreation, education and livelihood programmes, information exchange, and other purposes. They are established with the main objective of empowering [displaced, conflict-affected] and host communities and providing them with a forum to promote their participation in decisions that affect their lives.”¹

Community centers form a critical part of the Protection Cluster Strategy for Yemen, to ensure that communities remain at the center of service provision and community-based activities, including for IDPs, conflict-affected and host communities, children, youth and women.

Community Center: Basic Components of a “One Stop Shop”

In principle, community centers can include all safe and public places where protection response activities occur for the benefit of conflict-affected and host populations. Community centers ideally should be a “One Stop Shop” and provide access to a wide variety of services and programmes that cater to people of different ages, genders and diversity profiles in the same location. This is particularly convenient for displaced and conflict-affected persons, whose mobility may be hampered by distance, transportation costs or security concerns. As part of the first and second line responses of the Protection Cluster Strategy in Yemen, these services should include, as a minimum:

Protection cash assistance

The community center should have in place a protection cash assistance programme covering, as a minimum, assistance for:

- persons facing urgent protection risks; and
- emergency cash assistance for civilian victims of indiscriminate conflict, such as airstrikes or shelling.

Protection cash assistance should be accompanied with individual case management follow-up, as appropriate.

Case management (social workers)

The community center should have qualified case management staff or social workers (equipped with updated service mappings and referral pathways) able to provide individualized follow-up and safe referrals for, as a minimum:

¹ UNHCR, Community-Based Protection in Action: Community Centers, 2016, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/573d5bc64.html>. Extracts are quoted throughout this document.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection (including family tracing and unification, alternative care for unaccompanied minors and child victim assistance), • Survivors or at-risk of gender-based violence • Other persons with specific needs (e.g. older persons, persons with disabilities)
Civil documentation (legal assistance)	<p>The community center should have a legal assistance programme to address, as a minimum, persons lacking civil status documentation, in addition to other legal matters. Facilitation and referral mechanisms should be agreed with civil registry authorities.</p>
Community needs and services assessments	<p>Utilizing the Rapid Protection Assessment tool and other community outreach methods, the community center should have a focal point or team which ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ongoing identification of persons with specific needs (e.g. women and children at risk, survivors or at-risk of gender-based violence, older persons, persons living with disabilities, etc.) in the community, • conducts or continually updates information and mapping of available services in order to conduct safe referrals; and • works, together with the community, to identify community-level protection risks.
Livelihoods and community development projects	<p>The community center should include activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to poverty reduction and increase opportunities for sustainable livelihoods among vulnerable IDPs and conflict-affected men and women, and/or • small-scale, low cost community development projects which respond to needs expressed by the local community.
Support for family resiliency and community solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community center should have a focal point, staff and necessary space (in conjunction with activities in the community) to conduct activities for men, women and children through age and gender appropriate activities that address immediate effects of conflict and build resiliency. • Children-friendly space activities should be conducted in cooperation with the educational departments and schools in the targeted locations. • Psychosocial support activities should be conducted in coordination with specialized mental health partners and staff.
Mine risk education	<p>Through communities and agreed modalities, the community center should support raising the awareness of communities on the risks of mines and UXOs.</p>
Community-based protection networks	<p>The community center should have a focal point managing community-based protection networks, or groups representing age, gender and diversity groups of displaced and conflict-affected communities to enhance their self-protection.</p>
Transit kits	<p>Through agreed distribution modalities, the community center will be a location to assist in the distribution of transit kits to help families with basic respect and dignity.</p>
Other community mobilization and outreach	<p>Depending on, and guided by the community, other community mobilization and outreach activities may include:</p>

- Awareness raising and information sharing
- Mobile outreach activities
- Social cohesion
- Skills development
- Recreation
- Feedback and complaints mechanism (mandatory)

Considerations When Setting Up a Community Center

The different steps and key considerations when setting up a community center will inevitably vary from one context to the other. There is no “one size fits all” approach and planning should be taken in close consultation with beneficiaries and be based on their recommendations and suggestions. Some key considerations include:

Sustainability

- When it is feasible and will not lead to protection risks, support to existing community centers should be the preferred option.
- While it is preferable to support local people to initiate and run their own community centers, during the initial stages community centers may have to be temporarily run by humanitarian partners. It is critical to identify local organizations or communities themselves to gradually take over the management of centers and build their capacities, with support from municipal structures.
- Some community centers managed by local NGOs or community groups have found ways to generate income in order to reduce their dependency on external funding, e.g. catering business or small fees for skills training (waived for at-risk families). Charging fees for certain activities or services provided at community centers is, however, only recommended in contexts where beneficiaries have access to livelihoods opportunities.

Participation

- Beneficiaries should not merely be able to attend events, but should be meaningfully involved in the assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and services provided at community centers.

Other Considerations

- Located in areas with high concentration of beneficiaries and no protection risks for access.
- Accessibility, preferably at the ground floor, and with disability ramps and/or elevator.
- Existing utility connection (e.g. water, electricity, telephone).
- Adjacent space for expansion.
- Potential opportunities to contribute to local community development.

Community Center Example Diagram

Below is an example diagram of the various services and departments within a community center in Yemen:

