

ARC resource pack

Study material

Foundation module 6

Community mobilisation



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Training material for this module

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This module is one of the following series of **ARC resource pack** modules.

Foundation modules

- 1 Understanding childhoods
- 2 Child rights-based approaches
- 3 Programme design
- 4 Participation and inclusion
- 5 Advocacy
- 6 Community mobilisation
- 7 Psychosocial support

Critical issue modules

- 1 Abuse and exploitation
- 2 Education
- 3 Children with disabilities
- 4 Sexual and reproductive health
- 5 Landmine awareness
- 6 Separated children
- 7 Children associated with armed forces or armed groups

All modules include:

- **study material** giving detailed information on the module's subject and a list of further reading
- **slides** giving key learning points and extracts from the study material, offering a useful resource when introducing training events and exercises
- **training material** for participatory workshops that comprises **exercises** giving practical guidance for facilitators and **handouts** for participants.

The following documents are also included in the ARC resource pack CD-ROM to ensure you can make the most of these modules.

- User guide
An introduction to the ARC resource pack and the relationships between modules.
- Training manual
Advice and ideas for training with ARC resource pack materials.
- Facilitator's toolkit
General guidance on how to be an effective facilitator, with step-by-step introductions to a wide range of training methods.
- Definitions of terms
- Acronyms

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Introduction

This module on community mobilisation has been developed as a resource for those humanitarian and emergency workers whose engagement with child protection, brings them into contact with **communities**. The module aims to provide material that can assist in understanding roles and functions of the community in the realisation of children's protection rights, the impact emergencies and disasters have on community structures and functioning, and ways and means for agencies to **mobilise** people and institutions in communities to achieve improvements in children's lives.

The module builds on an earlier ARC module on community mobilisation. In this newer version, principles and standards of rights-based approaches have been updated to bring the module into line with other resource pack modules.

The study material draws strongly on two recently published resources, *A community-based approach in UNHCR's operations* from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and *First line of protection* from Save the Children.

Communities are important to children's lives and to the realisation of their rights. After the family, the community provides the immediate environment for the exercise of rights. As the domain in which people share common resources (space, natural environment, resources, infrastructure, institutions, agency) it has an important function in the provision of the immediate protective and developmental environment for the developing child. The community also provides, or has the potential to provide an environment in which people can group their resources and energies and interact with agents of government, non-State actors or agencies to achieve improvements.

There is no one simple description of a typical community. Humanitarian and emergency workers will find themselves engaging with people in community institutions and structures that can vary considerably. In some instances these institutions may be well established, very strong and resilient. In others they may be much weaker, if formed at all. Planning and implementing interventions with communities will require investment of time in understanding how the community functions and how to best tailor the intervention to the particular setting.

The UN Convention on the rights of the child (CRC) provides a framework of standards and principles that can assist in planning an intervention. In a rights-based approach, the goal of any intervention is to improve enjoyment of children's rights. In many, if not in most or all instances, the aspirations of families and community members for children are in line with this framework. There will be occasions where humanitarian workers should work to establish these standards as the goals to which they can aspire.

Rights-based approaches also require the ways of working to be guided by human rights principles and to respect and facilitate the rights of those who are involved. In relation to both, humanitarian workers will need to be confident of their agencies' policies and their own approach.

Section 1 Concepts: the community and children's rights Reviews the concepts and definitions that are important to the understanding of communities and rights and community-based approaches in the context of emergencies.



Section 2 Characteristics of community-based approaches Explores the key principles that are being applied in working with communities using a rights-based approach.

Section 3 Community-based approaches methodologies Reviews methodologies for community-based approaches, considering initially the components of a situation analysis and then the steps involved in processes of community mobilisation. The section concludes with principles guiding ways of working.

Section 4 Community-based approaches with specific groups and settings Considers community-based approaches and community mobilisation in some specific settings, with children and children's groups, with women, and in urban settings.

Definitions of terms

- **Community** Refers to a group of people that recognises itself or is recognised by outsiders as sharing common cultural, religious or other social features, backgrounds and interests, and that forms a collective identity with shared goals.
- **Duty bearer** Is a body or individual who has responsibilities and obligations towards rights holders, as enshrined in international and national law and human rights instruments. The State, as the prime duty bearer, has an obligation to respect and protect people's rights and provide children's rights (see rights holders).
- **Rights holder** Is an individual or collection of individuals in possession of a right who can claim to see the right respected, protected and fulfilled. The rights holder may also have duties and obligations (thus also being a duty bearer) to other rights holders (see duty bearer).
- **Stakeholder** Includes all groups of people who can affect or will be affected by the proposed activity; children, individuals, institutions, enterprises or government bodies that may have a relationship with children. There are differences in the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, their access to and control over resources and the part they play in decision making.



Section 1

Concepts: the community and children's rights

Key learning points

- There is no one simple manifestation of a community, communities will vary in different contexts and settings and it is necessary to get to know the individual characteristics.
- Communities can be thought of as bearing a range of **collective** duties in relation to children's rights, and may often be a major support to families especially when State structures are compromised.
- Understanding how power is manifested in a community, and in particular who has decision making power over issues that concern children will be fundamental to understanding the way in which the community functions, how it adapts, deals with issues, resolves challenges (or perhaps doesn't).
- Emergencies may disrupt the capacity of the community, but resilience can often enable the community structures to reform.
- Working with displaced persons requires learning about members of the host community, who are also stakeholders, and addressing their concerns whenever feasible.

Characteristics of communities

Community can be described as a group of people that recognises itself or is recognised by outsiders as sharing common cultural, religious or other social features, backgrounds and interests, and that forms a collective identity with shared goals.

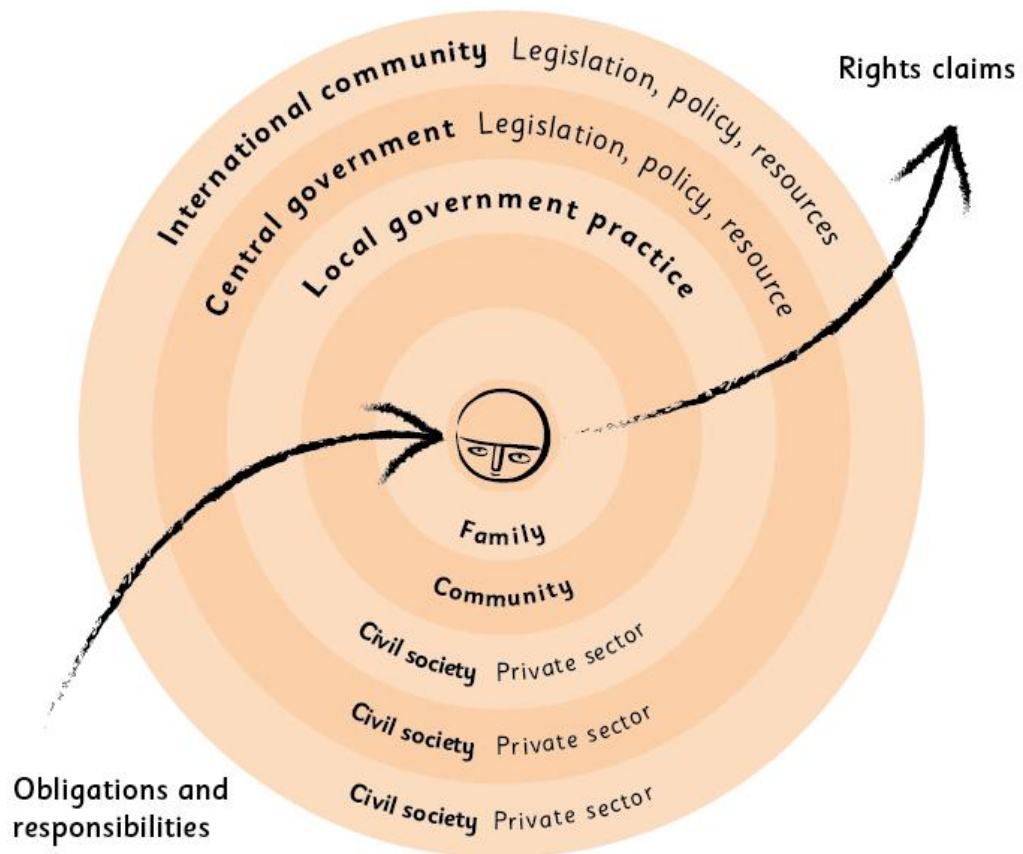
At the same time it should be recognised that what may be externally perceived as a community might in fact be an entity with many sub-groups or communities. There may be divisions into clans or castes or by social class, language or religion. A community might be inclusive and protective of its members, but it might also be socially controlling, making it difficult for sub-groups, particularly minorities and marginalised groups, to express their opinions and claim their rights.

Community can also be described as a concept pertaining essentially to social relations, a group of people, less self-sufficient than society, but who have closer **associations** and deeper sympathy among members than society in general. Members of a community often share a common identity, tend to use a common language, have clear criteria for membership and understand the social boundaries within which they operate. There are social and psychological ties among members, and often a connection with a geographic area. While one of the functions of community is to promote common interest, relationships of dominance and dependency exist in communities as they do in all human organisations.¹

Communities and children's rights

Viewed through the lens of children's rights, communities are important as the setting in which many of the institutions and individuals important to the child's survival and development are, or should be, interacting with children and their parents or caregivers, individually and collectively.





The child rights analysis framework utilised in **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches identifies a community level of duty bearers between the institution of the family and the local representation of State and civil society institutions.

In many instances the greater distance of the State from the family may give the community extra importance as the more immediate support system available to the family to function and meet its responsibilities to children. While it is relatively straightforward to ascribe duties to the parents and family, within a community there may be a less easily described, perhaps collective or shared, responsibility.

From a child-rights perspective the community can thus be thought of as an environment in which a range of different duty bearers and rights holders can interact and come together, either in the delivery of rights or as actors collaborating in achieving change.

The **responsibilities** of communities might be said to include:

- supporting and encouraging children's family and parents in the fulfilment of their duties
- ensuring safe but stimulating environments for children
- supporting State institutions responsible for fulfilling, respecting and protecting children's rights
- enforcing social norms that do not tolerate discrimination

- contributing to the child's sense of belonging
- fostering indigenous knowledge and culture
- supporting children's development into contributing members of the 'peaceful tolerant society' anticipated by CRC Article 29.

Individuals, children, parents, families may find value in coming together for a collective purpose within a community setting, and issues concerning children may well be a focus of such action. Community organisations may include parents' groups, neighbourhood crime watches, branches of citizens' associations, branches of cultural and sport associations or institutions (for example, scouts, culture clubs, local sport clubs), day care centres for children, religious groups, and others.

Communities' collective knowledge and motivation towards children's rights will be of critical importance to the environment in which children survive and develop. Factors that will be important to this will be the belief systems present in communities, the nature and capacity of the institutions present and the level of development of civil society institutions.

'It can be also be useful to think of the community as the smallest administrative unit of governance'.² This perspective uses the concept of community to describe the local presence of State and professional institutions and so provides a means to categorise the lower levels of State services. These might include, for example, community health posts, community agriculture offices, child protection committees, family planning committees and so on. Here the community is seen as the unit of cooperation, and the first line of accountability and consultation.

Communities obviously vary. Some may have long social memories and maintain customary or traditional laws that can have positive or negative effects on children's lives. Some may be more recently formed and have little or no existing social cohesion. Many have capacities and strengths that can be called on to improve children's lives. Others are the source of challenges to children's wellbeing.

Within communities a range of power relationships can be witnessed. People or institutions that facilitate, influence or lead in communities may include tribal leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, gang leaders, the military, and those with business or commercial interests. Understanding how power is manifested in a community, and in particular who has decision-making power over issues that concern children will be fundamental to understanding the way in which the community functions, how it adapts, deals with issues, resolves challenges, or perhaps doesn't, and how to engage with it.

Communities in humanitarian settings

By definition people can belong to communities when they live in the same place, but also if they are spread over a far wider area, such as religious or ethnic groups. In this module the term community will normally be referring to a group of people with common interests and shared objectives who are living in the same geographical area for example, a village, a refugee or internally displaced person (IDP) camp.

Refugees and displaced persons living in temporary communities often have different nationalities, religions, languages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and do not perceive themselves as belonging to any community.



Whether they live in camps, in transit and reception centres, or in urban dwellings, lack of economic options, restrictions on freedom of movement and/or imposed decisions on accommodation often dictate who their next door neighbours will be.

In some urban situations, internally displaced persons might prefer to keep their identities hidden, thus making it difficult to contact members of informal groups and mobilise people around common problems. In other instances, displaced persons living in urban areas might have assimilated well into existing sub-groups and may not need support. Working with displaced persons requires learning about members of the host community, who are also stakeholders, and addressing their concerns whenever feasible.

There is sometimes an assumption that the rural communities typically have a stronger sense of community bond compared to urban communities, particularly in the non-industrialised countries. However, such assumption may not be appropriate in all contexts. In some societies the sense of community is strong, in some the community bond is poor, and in others it is profoundly intersected by social divisions such as wealth, class, ethnicity caste.

After the arena of family, the community is generally the first line of support and assistance for its members and community-based action in emergencies has frequently been very important in providing protection to children. Through an understanding of the profile of a particular population, a community-based intervention may seek to build a sense of community and engage people in an active process of working collectively.

Impact of emergencies on communities

Besides sharing the same interests and aspirations, through the social interaction and exchanges, holding up common values, ritual, culture and traditions, the community develops bonds over timeframes that may extend to hundreds of years. Such social bonds can contribute to safety nets in communities, providing traditional support to vulnerable groups and individuals, including children. The sudden occurrence of an emergency can destroy or disrupt that safety net, reducing the community's ability to provide support.

An emergency situation can have a negative impact on community support structures. A sense of insecurity, fear, mistrust, anxieties or conflict of interests within communities can cause the traditional support network to become at least temporarily dysfunctional. Sometimes people who normally belong to the same community may be suddenly divided by ethnic, religious or political differences. The post election violence in Kenya in 2008 is one such example where people who had lived in the same village for hundreds of years engaged in violent clashes. If displacement occurs, people from the same original community are generally sheltered in different IDP or refugee camps or a protected area in the same camp.

Segregation and inequality based on ethnic, tribal, clanship, political or religious considerations, which may have been previously embedded in the societies, is exacerbated during emergencies. Such dynamics could both limit the sense of community and affect the success of community mobilisation efforts. Studies should be made as to how relations have been forged across these divisions in the past.



Community resilience

More positively, even in the chaos and trauma of life during and after an emergency situation, people have remarkable coping capacities, even under extreme circumstances.

In a relatively short period, community structures can reappear or new ones emerge as people begin to deal with day-to-day living and the need to provide for and protect their families and dependents, young and old.

The protection of children is closely linked to the availability of such supportive structures within the community and in practice these structures are likely to be much more important for children than externally provided resources. The care and protection of children is usually an area where people can work together, and identifying and understanding existing capacities and coping mechanisms are essential in the application of a community-based approach.

Training material for this section

Exercise 1 What is a community?

Exercise 2 What is a community in an emergency?

Exercise 3 The characteristics of communities and how they may be affected by emergencies

Handout 1 Scenario

Handout 2 Venn diagram of a settled community



Section 2

Characteristics of community-based approaches

Key learning points

- A community-based approach is a way of working in partnership with persons affected by emergencies. It recognises people's resilience, capacities, and skills and resources, and builds on these to deliver protection and solutions, and supports the community's own goals.
- A community-based approach is a way of working that requires a thorough understanding of how to support community structures and dynamics so that emergency-affected communities can be empowered to work towards the protection of their children.
- Rights-based approaches to working with communities for improving children's lives have two main implications for humanitarian workers: what is done, and how it's done.
- A rights-based approach requires openness and transparency about rights-based goals, and the commensurate obligations and responsibilities. It means space has to be created to listen carefully to community members and to work to build mutual understanding.
- All children, including those affected by emergencies, should, so long as it's in their best interests, be supported in their own activities and be afforded the opportunity to be active agents in processes and in decision making that affect them.

Community-based approaches

A community-based approach is a way of working in partnership with persons affected by emergencies. It recognises people's resilience, capacities, and skills and resources, and builds on these to deliver protection and solutions, and supports the community's own goals.

The approach is not limited to a particular function or sector of work. It requires understanding and consideration of the political context, the receiving population, gender roles, community dynamics, protection risks, concerns and priorities. It also requires that humanitarian workers recognise their role as facilitators, limitations in capacity and resources, the temporary nature of the presence, and the long-term impact of interventions.

A community-based approach can help communities work to prevent social problems and to deal directly with those that do arise, instead of having external actors step in and 'do it for them'. It supports persons of concern in re-establishing familiar cultural patterns and support structures. Indeed, one goal of a community-based approach should be to reinforce the dignity and self-esteem of people of concern and to empower all the actors to work together to support different members of the community in exercising and enjoying their rights.

Community-based approaches are not without some difficulties. Ideally, the community freely defines its priorities. But the responsibility of humanitarian agencies, guided by human rights and humanitarian law, is to respect individual human rights and to mobilise others to them. It is thus possible that the goals of agencies might not coincide with community practices or priorities. Ways must be found to work with the



community both to respond to the priorities of the community and to uphold the agency's mandates to protect all of its members and respect individuals' rights.

In practice this may mean introducing new practices, such as vaccinating children, educating girls and children with disabilities, preventing the exploitation of children's labour, creating mechanisms for the fair distribution of food and assistance items, encouraging women to participate in decision-making processes, and preventing sexual and gender-based violence.

A rights- and community-based approach requires openness and transparency about rights-based goals, and the commensurate obligations and responsibilities. It means space has to be created to listen carefully to community members and to work to build mutual understanding.

Community-based approaches for child protection

A community-based approach is a way of working that requires a thorough understanding of how to support community structures and dynamics so that emergency-affected communities can be empowered to work towards the protection of their children.

Experience has shown that community-based approaches can be an effective way of protecting children as they:

- recognise, reinforce and respect community structures while at the same time teach children about their rights and support a gradual change process where practices that violate children's rights are identified and openly discussed
- ensure the participation of children and help to restore or create a range of other supportive structures within the community such as children's groups or child protection committees
- facilitate the development of community institutions such as schools, preschools, health and recreation facilities.

Protection of children is often best provided by their own families, community members and by children themselves. Including children in the participatory processes will in itself support their resilience and in time, their recovery. Therefore developing a community-based strategy that consciously includes children and adolescents as active participants will contribute to their protection.

All programmes should endeavour to maintain a child rights perspective that includes child protection, development and survival, and participation rights of all children in all situations including that in the emergency. The child rights perspective should promote the development of the child by recognising the individual capacities, resilience, vulnerabilities and inner resources of the child to respond to the difficulties.

A community-based approach has to mean more than just 'working with the community'. Its objective should be to work in an equal partnership with communities to rebuild devastated child protection structures right from the outset of a crisis. Equal partnership with the community is achieved through meaningful participation based on the principles of international human rights standards and in particular the CRC.

This partnership is used as a foundation for mobilising local resources, such as volunteers and local skills and capacities, so that existing coping mechanisms and structures are strengthened and improved (or in some cases developed from scratch).



Resources, decision making and future control of projects are then devolved from the organisation to the community so there is an important element of ownership and of sustainability.

Human rights-based approaches

'One of the most important roles of ... organisation[s] is to support rights holders to claim their rights. This requires major shifts in the way many agencies are working. Rather than delivering services and doing advocacy work on behalf of poor and disadvantaged people, a rights-based approach requires organisations to support people to demand what they are entitled to. ... a rights-based approach demands that agencies work together to support broad processes of change in society. Supporting participatory processes that bring together government and civil society is one of the most effective ways to change relationships between rights holders and duty bearers.'

'Challenges for a rights-based approach' Children's rights information newsletter no. 18 Theis J, March 2005 p28

A rights-based approach is also founded on the principles of participation and empowering individuals and communities to promote change therefore enabling them to exercise their rights and comply with their duties. It identifies rights holders (women, girls, boys and men of concern) and duty bearers (principally the State and its agents), and seeks to strengthen the capacities of rights holders to make their claims and of duty bearers to satisfy those claims. This requires an attitudinal shift in how work is undertaken: people no longer viewed as beneficiaries of aid, but as rights holders with entitlements.

Rights-based approaches for improving children's lives have two main implications for humanitarian workers: **what is done** and **how it's done**.

What is done

- All interventions should endeavour to improve the realisation of rights, as established through international human rights instruments.
- Interventions should work to improve the capacity of duty bearers to meet their responsibilities and rights holders to affect claims against their rights.

How it's done

- Interventions and practice should be guided by human rights principles which include:
 - accountability and the rule of law
 - equity
 - participation
 - interdependence of rights
 - children's best interests a primary consideration
 - survival and development to the maximum extent of available resources.

More in-depth information on rights-based approaches is included in **Foundation module 2** Child rights-based approaches.



Principles of rights and community-based approaches

- Emphasis on the need for long-term development and not just the immediate relief of suffering.
- Emphasis on the importance of the social and political context in which people experience problems and stress and not just a focus on individual suffering (looks at and deals with individual rights violations from a wider socio-political and collective perspective).
- Assumes that people (including those who may have otherwise been labelled as vulnerable) are highly resourceful and aims to maximise the potential inner resources of all people including the most marginalised.
- Demand excellent participatory methods.
- Entail mutual respect between the organisation(s) and the community members.
- Supplement the communities' resources with selected external resources only when necessary and appropriate.
- View traumatic experiences of individuals from a solution focused perspective within the wider context of other rights violation. Since distressing experiences of violence are frequently compounded by practical concerns around housing, continued fear and threats to safety and lack of livelihoods.

Children's involvement in community-based approaches

All children, including those affected by emergencies, should, so long as it's in their best interests, be afforded the opportunity to be active agents in processes and in decision making that affects them.

The CRC establishes several rights that empower children to make this a reality. The articles take civil and political rights already available to adults and tailor them to the situation of children and their evolving capacities. The reasons behind these rights have been covered in **Foundation module 1** Understanding childhoods and **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion. For humanitarian workers the key facts to know about children's rights relating to community-based approaches include the following.

- Article 12 **Children's right to be heard** Creates obligations to ensure that children's perspectives are sought and included in decision making processes. This is both an obligation to seek children's perspectives, and also to take them into account.
- Article 15 **Children's right to associate** Provides children with a right to come together to further their own interests and agenda. It places an obligation on adults not to prevent children assembling, but more positively it recognises the value both to children learning how to function in groups around common interests, and to society to have the opportunity to express themselves collectively and pool their interests, energies and resources. Humanitarian workers have a role in ensuring that children are supported to come together.
- Articles 13 and 17 **Children's rights to freedom of expression and to information** Create obligations to ensure children have access to the information that they need to enable them to make informed judgements and decisions.



The obligation to ensure that children's evolving capacities are taken into account means that adults have an **overseeing role** in relation to these rights; an obligation to provide guidance and support to children in the exercise of these rights. Each child is different. A primary responsibility rests with parents to ensure that they understand their civil and political rights and responsibilities and progressively take their place as a part of society. At the same time parents are also charged with the responsibility of ensuring that children's capacities are not overestimated and they are not put into situations which are not in their best interests.

These principles of participation apply to **all children** and community mobilisation efforts, whether with children alongside adults or with groups of children only, should involve children in an age appropriate way. To protect the rights of children also requires close partnership with children, including initiatives to strengthen their capacity to protect themselves. The involvement of children in communal activities, including planning and monitoring, produces direct and positive results. This approach enhances their self-esteem and self-image, affirms their worth and, in turn, provides a buffer against the negative impact of conflict, flight and other difficult experiences.

Differing perspectives

'An interesting distinction between youth and adult perceptions of children's vulnerability appeared during focus group discussions. Young people felt that being prevented from going to school and having no free time to play with other children was more significant than material hardships. Adults focused more on material and physical needs. This is significant because the committees that determine need and allocate available resources are comprised of adults. The team felt that youth and adults' perspectives, given equal weight, together would generate the best response.'

Community action and the test of time: learning from community experiences and perspectives USAID

Children have their own particular needs, problems, concerns, resources and priorities

Children's view of the world is different from that of adults and their needs or concerns, and the resources they can bring also vary according to their age and stage of development. Even quite young children can offer useful ideas and innovative thinking about how to address problems. Adolescents form an age in between: their needs are frequently significantly different from those of younger children and of young adults. Adult assumptions about their needs and the invisibility of some of their problems can have serious consequences in programme planning. It is vital that children and young people, regardless of age and gender, are actively involved in articulating their ideas about problems, needs, resources and priorities, and are enabled to exercise some responsibilities in deciding how these should be met.

Engaging children in active coping strategies has been shown to contribute to their psychological wellbeing and resilience

Both physical and mental health is enhanced when people feel that they have some control over their lives. Research shows that children's resilience is enhanced when they have opportunities to participate in and contribute meaningfully to their immediate social environments. Including children in community mobilisation, or supporting initiatives they have already begun, allows them opportunities to contribute towards their own and others wellbeing and to take an active role in shaping their future, as the following example from the Asian tsunami shows.



Young people's groups bring identity, social and political awareness

Children's and young people's participation following the tsunami not only developed their self-confidence and other skills, but also raised their social and political awareness. Through their actions and the changed perceptions and reactions of adults, young people have taken on new roles for family and community.

Token young people have represented the community with outside agencies. When external developers wanted to take land after the tsunami, young people took an important role in the struggle for its retention. Older girls have been involved as well as older boys, and found their position changing as a result. Their families have benefited. The process also raised awareness of heritage and traditions, and they have a renewed sense of identity and pride, as well as self-confidence and self-esteem.

The participation of children and young people in emergencies: a guide for relief agencies based on experiences in the Asian tsunami response
UNICEF draft July 2007

Training material for this section

- Exercise 1** What is community mobilisation?
- Exercise 2** Why is community mobilisation important?
- Exercise 3** Community-based approaches
- Exercise 4** The characteristics of a community mobilisation approach
- Handout 1** Short scenarios
- Handout 2** Reasons
- Handout 3** Table of approaches
- Handout 4** Discussion
- Handout 5** Statements



Section 3

Community-based approaches methodologies

Key learning points

- Time must be invested in understanding the subtleties of the communities within which humanitarian work is undertaken.
- An initial exercise should assemble and synthesise what is already known by analysing documentation and data in order to ensure that work which has already been done is not repeated.
- Stakeholders can be both rights holders and duty bearers, and all stake holders should be heard in decisions that affect them.
- Establishing contact with the community is crucial, since these first efforts may set the pattern for the evolution of the relationship between an agency and its partners. Any contact should be tailored to individual communities and their contexts.
- Undertaking a situation analysis and participatory assessment both assists in understanding how the community functions and provides an entry point into an engagement, or a partnership between the community and the agency.
- It is important to understand how decisions are made in communities. Mapping and documenting the different kinds of community structures and identifying leaders can help develop a picture of how the community works.
- A key starting principle for engaging with protection issues is to recognise and build upon existing capacity and strengths where they are supportive of children's rights.

Following from the principles that were explored in **Section 2**, this section provides an introduction to some practical **how to** thinking that can be applied in community-based approaches. It does not provide a template that can be used in any or all circumstances, but should stimulate thinking about what to do.

The most powerful key message in this section is the imperative to invest time in understanding the community upon which work is focused and in creating good working relationships. There are many variables that can influence exactly how a community functions. Subtly different histories and belief systems, different individuals in positions of power and authority, and different environments all can have an impact on what can be achieved and how to go about it. Community-based approaches are very much about good process and require the **intervening** agency to think very carefully about their role and strategies for achieving improvements in children's protection and children's rights.

This section includes the following:

- situation analysis and getting to know the community
- participatory planning
- community mobilisation
- linking community-based approaches to broader rights-based programming
- challenges to successful community mobilisation.



Situation analysis and getting to know the community³

Three components that can be included in the development of a situation analysis include:

- information review
- stakeholder analysis
- participatory assessment.

Review of existing information available

An initial exercise should assemble and synthesise what is already known by analysing documentation and data. This stage makes sure that work is not repeated that has already been done and provides a starting point for the design of participatory consultations.

Data that should be sought includes the following.

- Population data including disaggregated information on the number (and trends) of unaccompanied and separated children, single-parent families, single women, persons with disabilities, older persons and grandparent-headed households, and how women's and men's roles have changed. Analysis of this information, which might reveal groups who need priority protection, including assistance, can then be shared with the community and validated with the populations concerned during participatory assessments.
- Agency operational reports, mission reports that can evidence existing problems.
- Existing assessment and analyses, economic surveys, HIV and AIDS studies, health and education reports, food basket monitoring reports, feasibility studies, purchasing power, availability of natural resources.
- Studies of State legislation and policies in place, government reports and plans on national health, education, social welfare and other services, and UN reports.
- UN country plans, national and international agency strategies that provide overview analysis of the political and human rights situation.
- Anthropological, ethnographic, social research.
- Maps of the area and areas of displacement, including proximity to significant external environments, for example, borders, conflict areas, areas vulnerable to natural disaster. Factors should be noted that can later be used in discussions with community members, for example, land availability, plot sizes, location of key infrastructure, natural resources and known zones of conflict, landmines, violence, exploitative factors and insecurity.

When reviewing existing information using an age, gender and diversity perspective, consider the following.

- The profile of the community, including capacities and skills, and who is most at risk.
- How the community is organised, its formal and informal structures and the roles these play in community life.



- The extent to which women, girls, boys and men of all ages and diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, participate in community management and decision making, and who might be excluded and why.
- Community protection mechanisms to support persons with disabilities and other groups with specific needs, and identify those who are at heightened risk.
- Resources available to people, such as land, tools, skills, and informal markets.
- The power relations between the different community members: Who has power over whom? How is it exercised? To whose benefit?
- The services and facilities available to persons of concern within the host community and local government.
- The interaction between the host population and persons of concern, and points of tension.
- The main protection challenges and the possibilities for durable solutions.
- The situation in the place of origin and the changes due to displacement.
- Which topics and individuals should be the focus of the participatory assessment phase.

Stakeholder analysis

A core principle of a rights and community-based approach is the right of people, adults and children, to be heard in decision making that affects them. This places an obligation on agencies to identify individuals and groups that might be affected by a particular action and may have an interest in participating in the planning of activities as a precursor to creating the means by which their views and opinions are sought and considered.

Stakeholders can be both rights holders and duty bearers. They might include operational and implementing partners, national and local authorities, UN agencies, members of the community including community leaders, traditional and religious leaders, civil society (local organisations, women's groups, cooperatives, self-help groups, organisations of persons with disabilities, child clubs), school boards, religious organisations. It is necessary to understand how these function, how they interact, where influence lies; their activities need to be mapped and planning of activities should be done by working in collaboration with them. In a rights-based approach it is necessary to ensure that additional structures or services set up by humanitarian actors should be planned so that they complement national systems and can be immediately or eventually absorbed into them.

Participatory assessment

Participatory assessment starts with making contact with stakeholders.

Establishing contact with the community is crucial, since these first efforts may set the pattern for the evolution of the relationship among agencies, their partners and the community. How to make contact with persons of concern will depend on the community and the context. There are no fixed rules; individual staff and members of the multifunctional team must use their experience, skills and knowledge to decide which groups or individuals can be approached and by whom, and which issues to raise.



First contacts in emergency situations are likely to focus on working with the community to collect and analyse basic data in order to assess protection risks and the most urgent needs. These discussions, with small groups of women, girls, boys and men of diverse backgrounds and ages, are useful starting points for determining who will do what and how assistance should be distributed. Meetings with women, including older women and girls, will provide an opportunity to discuss protection risks and access to healthcare and education. Meetings with boys can be valuable in learning about potential forced recruitment. Information about the mobility of persons with physical disabilities, any discrimination they face, and their access to services may best be obtained through meetings and home visits.

The process of participatory assessment is a process of building partnerships with women and men of all ages and backgrounds. Through structured dialogues with and meaningful participation by the concerned groups, protection risks and priority areas for action can be identified. At the same time, community capacities and resources to prevent protection risks and identify solutions can be jointly identified, and the responsibilities of external stakeholders clarified.

In some instances, there might be no organised groups at which work may be aimed. This is likely to be the case in urban areas, where displaced persons are dispersed, or when people have just arrived at a camp or a transit centre from different areas and do not yet know each other. Nonetheless, people are likely to start interacting around some common interests, such as health, religion or business opportunities. If there are no groups, the team might begin by identifying individuals who can guide the team members and help them mobilise the community. Even in an urban context, displaced individuals are usually concentrated in specific areas. They often have access to informal networks, and there might be meeting points, such as religious and charity institutions, market places or community-based host organisations, where information can be obtained on how to establish contact with persons of concern.

In both urban and rural contexts, a clear outreach strategy must first be developed, in coordination with stakeholders, based on the mapping exercise undertaken as part of the situation analysis.



Tips on making first contact with the community

- Understanding community practices and traditions prior to establishing contact can help identify the appropriate approach for engaging with different groups and members of the community. Focus should be on learning and listening, particularly in the beginning.
- Opportunities should be taken to discuss and meet informally with persons of concern (at the health post, during registration, at distribution points, in the queue for water).
- Those who manage to establish first contact with the humanitarian workers might become **gatekeepers**: they might not mention other groups in the community that require support if they believe resources are scarce.
- Existing committees or community-based organisations should be identified through which the community can be accessed and messages can be passed.
- Messages might only reach certain groups, such as other community leaders, and not all members of the community. Outreach strategies should be developed with the leaders and others to ensure that everyone is informed, including children.
- Information should be delivered in a language that everyone can understand, is culturally sensitive and is correctly perceived and understood.
- Meetings should be arranged at mutually convenient and agreed upon times.
- First impressions matter. Those groups or persons in the community who do not meet with agencies or partners may draw their own conclusions about organisations based on whom the staff chose to meet with, how they behave and what happens after their visit.
- Immediate follow-up should be made after the initial meeting. Security issues, especially for internally displaced persons, should be closely monitored.
- Transparency, respect and consistency are essential for building trust, confidence and collaboration between an external agency and its community partners.

Adapted from 'Ten tips on making initial contact with the community'
A community-based approach in UNHCR operations UNHCR p45

Participatory planning

A participatory planning process brings stakeholders together to undertake a final analysis of the information gathered through the desk review, the study of the context and the population profile, the stakeholder analysis and the participatory assessments. The priority protection risks, needs and preferred solutions can be analysed from an age, gender and diversity perspective, forming the basis of a planning exercise.

Through the exercise, common goals and actions to improve the protection of children can be agreed and different rights holders and duty bearers identified. The capacities and contributions of the community members and other stakeholders can be assessed jointly in order to determine what areas are adequately covered and what gaps exist.



The final outcome could include agreements on what efforts will be undertaken to meet these and by whom.

If possible, children should be represented at the planning stage alongside other stakeholders and given appropriate and timely information so that they can participate meaningfully. Agencies must be willing to adopt transparent procedures. In some IDP situations, this might be difficult if there are security concerns with government partners. In these cases, it might be necessary to have separate planning meetings. The participatory planning process concludes the situation analysis and links the findings of the participatory assessments to the design of the programme or project.

These final outcomes will vary in format, depending on the type of organisation and the goals of the participating stakeholders. For example, the result for the community could be community action plans, to be supported by different agencies.

Community mobilisation⁴

Undertaking a situation analysis and participatory assessment both assists in understanding how the community functions and provides an entry point into an engagement, or a partnership between the community and the agency. Each situation will need to be developed according to the context, the capacities and the goals, and be guided by the community and rights principles and characteristics that were explored in **Section 2**.

Community mobilisation is a key component of a community-based approach. Its aim is to assist communities to know and enjoy their rights by working with them to strengthen their capacity to address protection risks, identify short and long-term solutions, agree on priorities, develop and implement action plans that respect individual rights and monitor and evaluate results.

In practice, **community mobilisation** involves establishing contact with community members and leaders, building an understanding of the social and power dynamics in the community, and bringing people together to agree on the best and most acceptable ways of working in partnership with the community.

It does not always occur spontaneously, in fact, it often requires guidance from effective facilitators. Reviewing the findings of the situation analysis will facilitate the community mobilisation process and may reveal obstacles to mobilisation, such as misperceptions about other actors, distrust among different groups, a lack of expertise to support the process, lack of analysis of the root causes of problems, and/or lack of information, including about human rights, particularly women's and girls' rights. It is important, and most effective, to use participatory methods when working to mobilise the community.

A community mobilisation process in the context of conflict, displacement and humanitarian crises can involve the following related components. These may follow the sequence below or be adapted in order to the situation at hand.

- Community mapping of management structures.
- Community-based representation.
- Community-based protection responses and solutions.
- Community capacity building.



- Community action planning.
- Community-based monitoring and evaluation.

Community mapping of management structures

It is important to understand how decisions are made in communities, and if necessary to start a process of improving existing structures so that the community is represented equitably and that the structures allow for the meaningful participation of women, adolescents, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Mapping and documenting the different kinds of community structures and identifying leaders can help develop a picture of how the community works.

If reliance is placed only on first contacts and with a few leaders, or only on leadership structures, problems will inevitably arise. This is not only because these might not be representative, but also because if people observe that all interaction takes place with a few individuals and other structures are ignored, accusations of corruption can arise. Such situations can also lead to sexual exploitation and abuse.

To support structures that are representative of all it will be advisable to spend time in the community with a wide range of people, discussing whom they consider to be leaders and why, and which structures they think function best and why. This can be done through the process of participatory assessments. Participatory exercises offer excellent opportunities to learn about the community and can, in turn, serve as awareness-raising exercises about participation, human rights, representation and leadership.

The process of mapping could include committees of elders, midwives' committees and traditional justice systems. Observing their methods of working will help develop an understanding on how to work well with the community and assist in identifying human rights issues. Through mapping, it should be possible to obtain a clear understanding about the role of each committee, its rules, how the different committees interact with each other, and how people can present problems or offer suggestions to the committees.

Community-based representation

Regardless of the diverse positions and attitudes among existing leaders, it is important to find ways to work with them in order to ensure access to the wider community. It is not helpful to establish parallel structures at the leadership level, as these might be undermined by existing leaders and, in the long term, important protection issues might be pushed underground.

If the mapping exercise has revealed that groups are excluded from processes it may be appropriate to work with partners and progressive community members to define strategies to gain the support of leaders to introduce change. Exercises can be undertaken with the community to analyse the obstacles and protection risks that under-represented groups face when they wish to have access to or influence decision makers.

It is important to be clear on guiding principles. Information should be shared with partners **and the community** about rights-based policies so that they understand why it is necessary to discuss and take action on these issues.



Where leadership structures are just being established, for example in a newly forming community, it may be possible to work with persons of concern to ensure that the structures are as representative of the wider community as possible at the outset.

For example, it may be possible to advocate for clear selection criteria for candidates, support the meaningful representation of women in the committee, explain why it is important for persons with disabilities and young people to be represented, and ensure that groups that have been discriminated against have the support and capacity to participate fully and equally in any meeting. If this is not the case, negotiations or mediations should be made on their behalf. In an urban setting, pre-established formal committees might not exist, so it might be helpful to establish such committees to strengthen informal networks.

Community-based protection responses and solutions⁵

A key starting principle for engaging with protection issues is to recognise and build upon existing capacity and strengths where they are supportive of children's rights. Normally, communities and individuals develop mechanisms to respond to most of the protection problems they face. In many situations, they will already be dealing with the problem adequately, although people might welcome additional support. Time should be spent learning what the traditional methods are for responding to the protection needs of children. If children's rights are traditionally respected, these practices should be replicated, rather than introduce different systems.

There may be situations where community members do not recognise a practice as a child protection risk, and there will be no community response or the response might be inadequate. This is often the case for sexual and gender-based violence. It might be necessary to inquire discreetly about what happens to a child complaining of abuse by a family member, how the community perceives such an issue, and what the community's reaction will be toward the child. When the community response does not meet international human rights standards, work should be done with people to change their responses.

'The universality of human rights can be challenged by members of the community on the grounds that local culture and tradition should take precedence. Some UNHCR staff have resisted taking action to promote and protect the rights of persons of concern on the grounds that it would interfere with local culture. As UN staff members, it is important to review our own attitudes and move beyond such responses as 'that's their culture'. Cultural beliefs are neither homogenous nor permanent; they are continually being renewed and reshaped, including by conflict and displacement, the media, education, the Internet, and deliberate efforts to influence values through revisions of law or government policy.'

A community-based approach in UNHCR operations p75

To support community responses that meet children's rights standards

- Assist the community in developing a set of good practices from their own experience.
- Help document these practices to guide future decisions and establish precedents to which they can then refer when faced with similar situations.
- As good practices are identified, agencies should disseminate them as positive examples, promote them, and provide further support, if required.



- Find ways of extending these examples to support other areas of the community's work.

When community actions do not meet human rights standards

- Facilitate discussions with other community members about the negative consequences for the affected individuals and reflect on the impact on the individual and on the broader family and community.
- Analyse where the practice came from and why it is considered acceptable, important or valuable.
- Discuss alternative responses with the concerned community members and find ways to include these in future discussions and plans.
- Identify small entry points for change and raising awareness, and provide support to individuals and groups who are willing to work for change.
- Ensure that people have understood which practices are unacceptable and why, and ensure that you (or your partners) do not support such practices.

Community capacity building

Capacity-building support should be designed jointly with the community and should be based on an analysis of the community's skills, capacities and objectives. These activities should be transparent so that everyone understands who will benefit, why and how those trained will support other members, and what options will be available later. Capacity gap analysis (see **Foundation module 3** Programme design) may be useful as a prompt to assist in thinking about the nature of capacity gaps, personal motivation, authority to act, and resources.

The training of community members in participatory methods and in participatory ways of working with children, if required, should take place early in the relationship. Simple tools, such as transect walks and timelines, can be easily shared, although more analytical methods, such as ranking and problem trees, require more preparation and time. One of the best ways to undertake these exercises is first to train community members in the methodology through demonstrations and practice, with the aim that they then conduct the same exercises with their community.

When working with communities to strengthen their capacities:

Raise awareness on a rights-based approach, including the roles of community members as rights holders and duty bearers

Clarifying these two categories will facilitate the dialogue between community members and humanitarian agencies and will help establish the ground rules for the working partnership.

Develop action research skills, including with children

In deciding which course of action to pursue, a group needs reliable information. Since many displaced communities are unlikely to have access to such information, people may need support in devising their own research capacity and developing community-based data collection techniques. **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion provides tools and methods that can be utilised.

Avoid early failure

While groups must determine their own goals, care should be taken to help them avoid actions that are unlikely to succeed, especially in the early stages. Networking with



similar local groups involved in child protection activities will increase the chances of success and allow for the exchange of experiences and information. Participatory assessments can be used to evaluate lessons learned and incorporate them into capacity-building activities.

Encourage groups to chart their own course

Empowerment is achieved when the assistance provided supports the group's own plans and ideas. Groups and their individual members know their priorities best. The aim should be that groups establish their own agendas and contribute their own skills. External actors should provide information and support as required, provided that the activities adhere to international legal standards.

Build awareness raising and empowerment into all activities

Group meetings can be an occasion for debate about the causes of child protection and child rights challenges and possible ways to address these causes. For instance, link with functional literacy activities for women can be used to raise awareness about the root causes of their problems. Legal literacy classes could combine raising awareness on rights and a gender analysis of national laws with literacy skills.

Forge alliances with other local groups

Similar interest groups can join together in coalitions and networks and take on bigger challenges and achieve wider goals by supporting each other's struggle and action.

Balance external and internal contributions

External funding, whether from foreign donors or from local or national host governments and NGOs, should be understood to be a temporary measure to assist communities of concern in the initial stages of setting up their initiatives. Experience shows that most groups become stronger when they are self-reliant and independent.

Create the context for learning through transparency and information sharing

Communities need information in order to participate meaningfully. Information can be shared through public meetings, notice boards, leaflets, and public announcements. Whichever means of communication and information are used, find out how the message is interpreted and perceived; don't assume that because it has been passed on or handed over it is understood. Communication should flow both ways, from humanitarian workers to the communities and vice versa, and from community representatives to community members and vice versa. Use random checks to ensure that all community members have received information, especially those who are housebound or speak a different language from the majority. Ensure that information is child friendly and accessible to children.

Community action planning

A community action plan can be developed from the analysis of rights and the prioritisation of protection risks, assistance needs, capacities and solutions identified during participatory assessments and other activities. The plan is based on what the community feels able and willing to do to address the issues identified.

While the collection and analysis of information should involve a large number of people, it may be more practical if the plan itself is drawn up by a smaller group, such as a planning committee or a community action team. This group may take responsibility for developing the action plan and monitoring its implementation. This does not mean that there will not be a role for members of the community who are not on the planning committee; the implementation of the plan will depend on the wider



community. The process for selecting planning committee members should reflect considerations outlined in **community-based representation**.

Community-based monitoring and evaluation

Of all the activities, community monitoring and evaluation are perhaps the most essential, since they identify shortcomings and provide for transparency and accountability. Monitoring and evaluation also refer back to participatory assessments for determining what is or is not working. Through regular participatory assessments with the groups that are expected to benefit from projects, timely adjustments can be made to those projects, if necessary. Failure to monitor can lead to misdirected assistance and leave room for abuse and exploitation.

Community-based monitoring focuses on the implementation of activities to ensure that they are running smoothly and helping to achieve immediate objectives. Regular monitoring is important because planning processes are rarely perfect and situations change constantly. Monitoring is best conducted in partnership with those who are responsible for the project, those who participate and those who should receive the benefits. Monitoring must include regular visits to those with specific needs to ensure that they are not being excluded.

Community-based monitoring focuses on the implementation of activities to ensure that they are running smoothly and helping to achieve immediate objectives. Regular monitoring is important because planning processes are rarely perfect and situations change constantly. Monitoring is best conducted in partnership with those who are responsible for the project, those who participate and those who should receive the benefits. Monitoring must include regular visits to those with specific needs to ensure that they are not being excluded.

Community-based evaluation is a review of the entire programme or project to see whether goals are being met and if the situation has improved. It can be conducted through participatory assessments, surveys and other methods. It is important that the different stakeholders agree which project or services are to be evaluated, with whom and when. The following questions can be used to guide an evaluation.

- What has changed for the group or the community because of the project?
- Do the changes correspond with the desired outcomes? If not, why not?
- Were the services delivered in an effective manner? Can the efficiency of procedures be improved?
- How were the project or services monitored and by whom? Does this need to improve?
- Was anybody excluded? If so, why? Was this detected quickly and addressed? If not, why not?
- Were those people at heightened risk and/or with specific needs contacted regularly to ensure that they had received the right support or service?
- Were people regularly informed of the progress of the project and how to access any related support?
- Were mechanisms set up to enable people to make complaints or discuss problems?
- Were the attitudes of those providing the services respectful and in keeping with organisational values?



- What has been learnt from this experience? How can this learning be applied later?



What might this look like? A case study from Côte d'Ivoire: mobilising local communities

The following outline of a community-based initiative in Côte d'Ivoire illustrates many of the guiding principles of this approach. It demonstrates how communities can become empowered by their participation in programmes and own them from the outset, which in turn makes them far more likely to be sustainable. It shows how the participation of children in the programme enhances the protection of children's rights through their work in children's groups. It shows the importance of identifying, training and inspiring volunteer workers and of providing an enabling and sustainable environment for them to work in which endures in the long term. The quietly effective and highly successful work being done by the children's groups and child protection committees on a day-to-day basis illustrates how rewarding this approach can be in protecting children whose lives have been shocked and destabilised by conflict.

The context

Côte d'Ivoire has been subject to an extended socio-political conflict causing massive internal displacement of populations and widespread unrest since late 1999. The country has been divided into the government controlled zone in the south and rebel controlled zone in the north. Children have been exposed to violence and abuse and there have been an increasing number of cases of sexual violence and exploitation, recruitment into armed groups and child trafficking. The impact of the conflict upon the normal structures for protecting children's rights has been devastating and children lack access to basic services. Since the beginning of the conflict, public services such as schools and health centres stopped receiving support from the government in the northern part of the country. It is estimated that 85% of the healthworkers in the north and west have left and 80% of the health units have been closed after being plundered. Many civil servants, including teachers, healthworkers and social workers who left the north, continue to be paid as government employees in the south but have still not returned to the north. The institutions that register births are non-existent or grossly overworked. People don't register their children because they cannot afford the expense and because the centres are too far away. In some areas only 20% of children have a birth certificate.

Starting up

It is in this context of ongoing crisis that Save the Children Sweden began its community-based programme in 2003. The organisation started by trying to identify the key problems facing children as a result of or exacerbated by the war. This information was then verified by approaching the community leaders and discussing key ideas with them concerning children's rights, the impact of the conflict on children and the role of communities in providing children with protection. Following this consultation, community leaders went back, inspired, to their own communities and encouraged the creation of child protection committees and children's groups. Once established, these groups determined what interventions should be made and how they were going to organise themselves to support the children in their communities. In 2008, Save the Children Sweden supported 87 child protection committees and 125 children's groups throughout its programme in Côte d'Ivoire.



In 2003, Save the Children Sweden also began collaboration with the Ministry of Family and Social Welfare. 25 social workers were trained on child rights and child protection so they could give technical support to the new community-based initiatives.

In areas where there were no social workers because social services were not functioning, local NGOs or community mobilisers were identified and trained instead. This core group then provided essential advice and support to the communities to get their committees and children's groups up and running. The formation of this group to provide technical support was an essential element in devolving the provision of advice from Save the Children Sweden to existing community structures and of enabling sustainability. The child protection committees and the children's groups are two complementary structures working from the adult and child perspective respectively to discuss and resolve issues confronting children. The committees are comprised of groups of 11 to 15 people in a village or neighbourhood and the children's groups consist exclusively of children who meet to play and exchange ideas and experiences. It is estimated that more than 30,000 children have benefited from activities organised by the committees and children's groups so far.

What do the community groups actually do?

'We received books, chalk and rulers so we started the work. We tried to mobilise the area, especially those who did not go to school. We tried to get them into school instead of doing nothing at home.'

Mamo Karamoko, president of a child protection committee, Côte d'Ivoire

To begin with, the community groups assigned roles to each member and developed a sort of code of conduct inspired by the Save the Children Alliance Child protection policy. Each committee then developed a unique combination of activities to address the needs in their communities. They were supported by Save the Children Sweden with materials and by the social workers, other NGOs and community mobilisers with technical support. The following are some examples of initiatives undertaken.

- **Mobilising their communities** Acting as a focal point for the reporting of child rights abuses which can be referred on to social workers, encouraging the community to volunteer for teaching in or constructing schools.
- **Raising awareness about child rights** Going door-to-door and organising group meetings to encourage birth registration, sending children to school, and discussing and discouraging child recruitment into the armed forces and early marriage.
- **Organising non-formal education classes** Since access to school is so difficult for many children, the committees have convinced community leaders to donate space for classrooms and encouraged others to volunteer as teachers. More than 4,300 children have now attended these classes.
- **Advocating for children to go to school** Both the committees and the children's groups encourage parents to send their children to school. They also approach school directors and ask them to admit children who have been displaced by war so that they can enrol during the middle of the school year. The children's groups inform the committees of parents who are refusing to send



their children to school so that this can be discussed with the families and resolved.

- **Obtaining birth certificates** Children with no birth certificates are significantly disadvantaged, not least because they can not pass exams to continue from primary to secondary school. Committees inform parents how to register their children with local authorities. Where there is no local authority, the committees themselves write down the names of children so that when birth certificates are issued in the future they have been recorded already.
- **Providing a link between the community and social services** The committees are a contact point for social workers in southern Côte d'Ivoire and a contact point generally for NGOs; for example, when a vaccination is going to take place, agencies inform the committees who in turn ensure that people bring their children to be vaccinated (these vaccinations often take place in non-formal education sites).
- **Mediating in families and communities** The committees mediate between children and their families where there is abuse or other problems. In cases of neglect or abuse, they refer the matter on to social workers or NGOs.
- **Taking care of children with special needs** The committees refer children who have been abandoned to social services and refer cases of separated children to agencies responsible for tracing and family reunification. They also incorporate children with disabilities into many activities and encourage their school attendance.
- **Organising recreational activities for children** The committees and children's groups organise games and events such as football, board games and cards, theatre groups and dance in order to bring children and families closer together.
- **Organising school feeding programmes** The committees have organised school canteens funded by the community itself. This means that all children who attend the non-formal education programme get a free lunch.
- **Preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and violence** The committees initiate debate within their communities about how to prevent violence against children. They also support children who have been abused by ensuring they receive medical attention and are helped to report the matter to the police and if necessary are also supported through the court process.
- **Preventing female genital mutilation** The committees raise awareness amongst communities where this is common that it is the right of girls not to be mutilated in this way. Whenever committees become aware that girls are at imminent risk of being mutilated, they try to prevent this by discussion with the families.
- **Protection of the physical environment** The committees sensitise communities and advocate with local government on the issue of the physical environment and have in some areas succeeded in getting garbage management systems established.
- **Preventing child recruitment into armed forces or groups** The committees



and children's groups negotiate with parents, children and armed groups to prevent children's involvement in armed groups, promote their release and support their reintegration back into the community.

'I voluntarily joined the army when I was 17 years old. The child protection committee approached me and spoke to me about my situation. I realised being in the military was not a good solution so I left. Now I am trying to make sure other children do not go down the same path I did.'

Member of a children's group in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

Linking community-based approaches to broader rights-based programming

Community-based approaches and community mobilisation activities provide agencies with valuable hands-on contact with the reality of lives of people within their communities and as such access both to insights and practical experience of challenges experienced in bringing changes in the enjoyment of their rights. It also contributes to building a constituency for change in many situations. Local community-based institutions, including children's organisations, have the potential for multiplying their impact by networking, joining forces, and jointly engaging in advocacy.

It shouldn't be forgotten that while working and facilitating, communities' own endeavours can make a huge difference to the realisation of rights at the immediate, community level; humanitarian workers are in a position to facilitate or to take these insights to different domains of influence. Community level analysis should not just restrict itself to understanding the local dynamics of the delivery of a right, but should consider the more systematic and institutional aspects that may need to be taken on and addressed within different structures, perhaps at legislative or policy levels.

For example:

- local child protection committees can be linked into wider protection networks
- national child rights reporting, taking place on a five-yearly basis can tap into community structures, both for gathering information about remaining challenges and also providing the means for dissemination of information
- assessment and analysis findings and community priorities can be recognised in agencies' longer term strategic planning
- child clubs can be assisted to federate and to achieve formal recognition.

Some challenges to successful community mobilisation

Addressing unequal power structures

In most societies inequality is embedded and uneven distribution of resources and power is a common phenomenon that pre-exist the emergencies. The power structure often restricts the access, and thus the meaningful participation, of the marginalised and powerless cross-section of the community. Unless this uneven power structure of the society is challenged so that the voice and concern of the powerless is raised, community mobilisation will not be effective. The external agencies must address this challenging task as the pretext for successful community mobilisation.



The community leadership structure itself may facilitate exploitation and the abuse of power and status if not monitored over time. They can also lead to self-interested individuals assuming leadership roles by default as a result of the attention given them by outside actors, or a whole community might become coerced by a minority. It is important to understand and then enhance and improve existing positive structures to ensure fair representation of the community and meaningful participation of the poor, the socially excluded, women, adolescents, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Constant monitoring is required to prevent corruption and domination by the powerful. Power dynamics (in relation to external agencies) are also important; unless skilled participatory methods are used, community members may lack the confidence to express their real views or may feel obliged to express certain views if they feel this will bring more support.

Ensuring broad representation and leadership from within all sectors and groups in the community and establishing democratic structures is a significant challenge. It is important to be aware of sub-group dynamics and how they influence the community. A balance of these interests is often difficult to achieve but efforts must be made to ensure that these groups complement each other and promote the inclusion of people who are usually invisible or left out of group activities. This is dealt with in **Section 4**.

Other challenges to effective community mobilisation

- Communities, especially those who have been through chronic or multiple difficulties, may have become despondent and dependent on aid. Practical concerns may take up all their time and energy so that it is hard for them to think of the bigger picture and see the advantage of working together.
- Communities may be suspicious or may not welcome external support.
- Where external agencies provide incentives for community members it is important that they reach agreement on the nature of these incentives.
- Time may be an issue for organisations who may themselves be driven by donor expectations, short-term funding or the need to produce results; media or public profile can be motivation for organisations to take shortcuts.
- There may be little sense of community and it may take time to restore or instil this.
- Agencies need to have an open mind and be prepared to hand over power and responsibility to the affected population. This can be difficult to do when agencies are expected to be accountable in pre-determined ways for instance, relating to donor funds.
- Facilitators need exceptional skills in participatory approaches, communicating with people and public speaking; they also need to be empathetic, respectful and patient.
- Scaling up a successful project or initiative to reach larger numbers can be difficult to achieve and requires a creative approach.
- Maintaining the momentum and addressing the need for different skills at different phases, for example, those people with skills to get an initiative up and running may not possess the skills required to manage a successful programme.
- Monitoring and evaluation that meets donors needs and is sensitive to the community.



Practical considerations on ways of working⁶

Rights and community-based approaches have implications for the ways of working for individuals, but also for the agencies systems' need to interact with communities. There has been much learning practice consideration. Not all agencies will be agreed on every aspect of this learning, and so the following examples are included as a prompt to thinking.

Managing expectations, time and resources

It is important to realise that how a humanitarian agency and its staff are perceived will determine the nature of the relationship between community members and external humanitarian workers. The image projected while operating can and does generate expectations. The big white cars, the increase in rents in the towns where offices are set up, and often the manner of entering into relationships with people can create images of power and money. Humanitarian workers will always have an impact on the political and power dynamics within the community. Staff must be able to recognise the importance of building trust, speaking to all and being transparent, and understand how they influence social dynamics within the community simply by choosing with whom they speak, or don't speak, during visits. Communities that have had negative experiences with humanitarian workers in the past might be reluctant to engage enthusiastically with a new group. Thus, staff might be too quick to conclude that the community is not motivated to help itself, rather than try to find out why they respond the way they do. It is up to staff to overcome these challenges.

Skills

A few specific skills are required to ensure that the participatory process is successful and to support a rights and community-based approach. The most important are communication skills, which are crucial in enabling people to work together on a common task or towards a common goal. Communication is a two-way process: information is both received and transmitted through sharing and listening. Persons of concern can participate meaningfully only if they have access to the same accurate information as humanitarian workers. Listening is the most important part of communication. Active listening requires a demonstration of interest in hearing what is said, in clarifying points and in being able to summarise information accurately. Respectful communication means talking **with** people, not at them.

Negotiating skills are important in facilitating complex processes with many different stakeholders who have various levels of power and decision making capacities. Persuasion and negotiation are constantly required to open discussions about sensitive issues.

Good observation skills and curiosity enable people to discover many things that are happening in a community that might not be spoken about, such as how children are treated and what activities they are engaged in, or whether or not persons with disabilities are given a role in the community or are absent from community life. Observation also allows non-verbal behaviour to be noticed and interpreted. This is essential when trying to learn about how those who have less voice, or feel less free to use their voices, participate. It also helps raise awareness of the effect being made on the community.



Attitudes

Above all else, attitudes and values that are transmitted will determine the nature of the relationship with community members. They will also enable good coordination and teamwork with other humanitarian agencies. It is all too easy to become burned out, detached from the work and sceptical when there are few, or no, quick results.

Attitudes towards members of the community and humanitarian peers are demonstrated in both verbal and non-verbal ways. An acute awareness of these signals is necessary to ensure that respect and impartiality are maintained. Body language is culture specific, and non-verbal messages can be perceived differently, depending on who is interpreting them. It is important to face people when speaking to them, show sustained interest, and make eye contact as appropriate (without staring, which can be perceived as aggressive). Messages are conveyed when looking at a watch while people are raising what they consider to be an important point, when arriving at a community meeting with a ready-made checklist, when sitting with people rather than apart from them (unless this is part of the ritual), when walking through the camp, meeting people, instead of remaining in the car.

Tone of speech and opening sentences often transmit clear signals to people about the seriousness of engaging in dialogue. Cutting off people who wish to raise points, not staying after a meeting to see people who are seeking individual time or leaving without making appointments all say something about priorities. The use of non-technical language and avoidance of acronyms are basic signs of respect.

Showing respect for traditions and customs will build trust. Offering information can also be helpful in reducing the distance between staff and the community.

Seeing people as human beings, rather than individual cases, populations or caseloads, makes it easier to treat people with respect and dignity. Regular, direct conversations with people, individually or in small groups, puts a human face on complex problems and is a reminder of the purpose of humanitarian work. There should be an awareness of how children are spoken to and whether they find staff approachable. Assumptions about people should be avoided. Just because someone falls into a particular group, this does not mean that he or she will necessarily fit the stereotype of that group. For example, if a woman is described as a widow, do not assume that she is necessarily in need of particular support (vulnerable). Until more is known about her, all that can be assumed is that her husband has died. Respect should be maintained for the humanitarian principle of impartiality. The behaviour of staff will also be observed and people will make assumptions. For example, staff might be perceived as external saviours or as foreign interlopers. Proposed contributions and limitations must be clearly outlined in order to define a relationship with the community.

Volunteerism

A key premise of the community-based approach is that community members work voluntarily. This means that they are not remunerated for their work but may nonetheless receive incentives and resources to assist them in doing their jobs (such as bicycles to travel long distances, training material and so on). It is important to clarify that agencies and organisations might also need to create support structures of paid staff, such as community mobilisers and social workers to encourage and support the community members to do their voluntary work. A good working principle that can



be applied is that assistance in mobilising resources already existing within the community is acceptable, but provision of additional resources other than those required for a project to be established is questionable. Other forms of incentives, recognition and motivation are provided to volunteers primarily in the form of training. For example, in southern Sudan, Save the Children provides community mobilisers with training and materials and in northern Darfur, members of the youth advocacy groups are also given extensive training. Other rewards can be long-term career opportunities, recruitment as social workers in NGOs and social services and official recognition by authorities such as official ceremonies and certificates. It is important that all NGOs and other agencies seek to harmonise their policies in each locality regarding volunteering. Otherwise, it results in confusion within the community, frustration and can result in an altogether rejection of the idea of community voluntary work: *'why should we work for free if another organisation will pay us?'*. It is also very important to have realistic expectations of the volunteers and not to overburden them with a large work load. In any community, volunteers have many other things to do in their busy lives and need to be encouraged to keep generously giving their time to tackle community problems.

Training material for this section

- Exercise 1** Methods of understanding community structures
- Exercise 2** Facilitating leadership structures ensuring their broad representation
- Handout 1** Venn diagrams
- Handout 2** Scenario and questions



Section 4

Community-based approaches with specific groups and settings

Previous sections in this module have explored generic guidance and principles for community-based approaches. In this final section more specific information is provided covering particular programming areas that are of relevance to humanitarian practitioners.

These three contexts for community-based approaches are dealt with in turn:

- community-based approaches with children
- community-based approaches with women
- community-based approaches in urban settings.

Community-based approaches with children

Key learning points

- Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them; their views are to be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (CRC Article 12).
- The mobilisation (or participation) of children amongst populations affected by emergencies will result in better protection initiatives; in addition, the children involved are likely to experience increased wellbeing and resilience.
- The mobilisation of adolescents in particular is important where there is a lack of educational and economic opportunity, which can result in boredom, despondency and loss of self-esteem.
- Children can make a significant contribution to their own protection and that of others before, during and after emergencies and can play a vital role in post conflict reconstruction and in the rebuilding of peaceful, more tolerant communities.
- Organisations can support and promote mobilisation of children by developing a strategic approach, using age appropriate participatory techniques and building and developing capacity.

This section should be read in conjunction with **Foundation module 4** Participation and inclusion.

Children's involvement in community-based approaches, including community mobilisation initiatives, may be possible in most emergencies, subject to the principle that children's best interests have to remain the primary consideration and issues of safety must be assessed carefully. It must also be remembered that children have the right to participate if they want to, but this does not mean that they must. A risk assessment should always be carried out by organisations seeking to work with children in this way in order to ensure such actions will not bring additional risks to their security and safety. This risk assessment should address issues in the wider environment, especially if working in a conflict situation, and in relation to risks posed to children and young people they come into contact with through the relief organisation (see below regarding child protection policy).



In some circumstances young people become spontaneously involved and active from the onset of an emergency, or even before if they are working on prevention activities. Strong youth organisations or associations may exist which can be utilised. In other situations, especially where youth have experienced chronic problems or have been affected by multiple events, considerable efforts are required to identify young people, stimulate their interest and develop capacity. Once young people are involved and can see that they are making a difference, projects can take on rapid progress.

Working with children

Organisations must ensure that staff who have contact with or are working with children are properly trained and are familiar with and adhere to the effective code of conduct of their respective organisations, which includes the protection of children. Rigorous standards in participatory practice are essential when working with children and their expectations must be carefully managed. Encouraging participation and promoting the mobilisation of children and young people in emergencies is very different to working in this way in a development context and it is essential to agree upon realistic objectives and goals. Young people can become extremely enthusiastic and it is important to ensure that while hope and optimism are encouraged, this is within the framework of what is achievable in the given context.

Understanding and building on existing actions, capacity and resources

A child rights situation analysis (see **Section 3** and **Foundation module 3 Programme design**), may have identified actions children are taking in response to the emergency and formal or informal groups of children working together. Through spending time with children, talking and interacting in a variety of ways (taking a ball and playing games may be a way to 'break the ice' and get their interest) it is possible to get a good understanding of how children are feeling and what they are doing. Is spontaneous action taking place? Were children involved in youth groups or children's associations prior to the emergency, and are these groups active or can they be reactivated? Boy Scouts or Girl Guides have been an important resource in a number of emergencies, for example, following the tsunami in Asia. Children's organisations led by children are becoming increasingly common, especially in Asia. These groups are often established in relation to child rights or cultural issues and young people may have excellent leadership skills and already have a good awareness of their rights.

Building or developing the capacities of children

Even where children have been actively working together prior to the emergency, they are likely to need additional support and training. Organisations working to support and promote the mobilisation of children will need to assess their needs and consider appropriate ways to support them. Children may need the following:

- information about the way the relief response is organised, and roles and responsibilities of different organisations and actors
- information about their rights
- information about partners or organisations with whom they could work
- training in public speaking, preparing for meetings, building confidence in self-expression



- training in specific skills such as assessment and survey work
- information and material for use in child-to-child (or peer education) projects, such as relating to family separation, prevention of disease or landmine awareness.

Which activities should children and young people be involved in?

Children, according to their age and evolving capacity to participate, can be involved at all possible stages of an emergency, from preparedness through reconciliation and peace building. As long as this involvement does not place them at additional risk or expose them to situations they may find stressful they should be encouraged to participate in whatever way they can. Their involvement should not place a burden of responsibility on them, or prevent them from participating in normal life, such as education, if that is available, and play. For some young people, as for some adults, becoming actively involved will help them recover from their experiences.

Children and young people have taken a role in emergencies through involvement in the following activities:

- needs assessment, carrying out surveys or data collection
- emergency preparedness
- prevention of separation
- prevention of recruitment
- prevention and reporting of GBV
- preparation and dissemination of information
- programme design, monitoring and evaluation
- feedback and complaints mechanisms
- child-to-child (or peer education) work
- establishing children's clubs or associations
- reconstruction, conflict resolution and reconciliation activities post emergency.

This list is not prescriptive or exhaustive and the role of organisations is to facilitate a process where children can identify what is important to them.

An enabling environment is also important, which means that families and other adults in the community should be encouraged to support the involvement of children and young people and to recognise the value in this.

Mobilising youth and adolescents

Adolescence is a critical period in child development characterised by considerable physical growth and emotional, intellectual, social and moral development. A secure and stable base is important as adolescents and young people strive towards independence and the development of a strong sense of personal identity. The loss of education or employment opportunities, friendships and peer groups can leave young people feeling very vulnerable. They are also likely to miss out on developing life and livelihood skills which would be learnt as part of their everyday life in usual circumstances.



These factors, coupled with uncertainty about their future, may lead to a variety of other and potentially very serious problems.

- Negative coping mechanisms such as involvement in various forms of anti-social behaviour such as violence, alcohol or substance abuse and early, unprotected sexual activity and prostitution which can result in the spread of sexually transmitted infections including HIV and AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.
- They can also be specific targets for political manipulation and involvement in armed forces or armed groups. Boredom, frustration and anxieties about the future combine to make them ready targets for under-age recruitment, abduction for labour or sexual purposes, or sexual and gender-based violence (see **Critical issue module 7** Children associated with armed forces or armed groups for further information).

On the other hand, adolescents and young people can be an enormous resource to the community, able to bring energy, enthusiasm, physical strength and creativity and imagination in problem solving. Making good use of their potential and drawing upon their ingenuity is vital in strengthening not only their own development but also that of the community as a whole.

Involving adolescents in work with younger children

Adolescents can be a vital resource in working with children. Very often they have both the motivation and capacity to provide various activities for children and other members of the community. These can include, for example, help in the day-to-day running of the child friendly space, identification and reporting of child protection cases, recreational and cultural activities for children, taking part in the formation of school committees and in actually providing education. Adolescents can also become mentors for younger children, providing one-to-one friendship and support.

Adolescents caring for themselves

In some emergency situations, groups of adolescents living apart from their own families may be unwilling, for whatever reasons, to return to their own families. In such situations it may be most appropriate to work with them using a community mobilisation approach, by engaging them as a group to enable them to plan and take responsibility for their own care arrangements.

Child-to-child or peer education approaches

Child-to-child approaches were originally developed as a means of involving children in community health improvement. The approach has shown that young people can have a powerful influence on peers, parents and the wider community and build grassroots movements for change. Child-to-child approaches have been notably developed in the areas of health and landmine awareness.



The child-to-child approach

The child-to-child approach to health education was introduced in 1978, following the Alma Alta declaration on primary healthcare and prior to the International year of the child. It helps to realise the potential of children to spread health ideas and practices to other children, families and communities. The ideas are as follows.

- Health is a very important part of every child's education. Unless a child learns to be healthy, they cannot live happily or study well.
- Health is everyone's concern, not just that of doctors and other healthworkers. Children have just as much responsibility as adults to keep themselves healthy and to help others become and stay healthy.
- The most important way of remaining healthy is to prevent illness from taking place. But even when children and adults are ill there are simple things which everyone can do to help them get better.
- There are also important signs of illness which one can learn to recognise. In this way one may be able to get help quickly so that it is easier to treat sickness.
- Health does not only mean being well in body. It also means having a bright and active mind and a happy, healthy life. Children can also help themselves and others towards this kind of health.
- Good health is based upon sound knowledge about health. Unless the really important facts, ideas and skills necessary for good health are known and understood, ideas cannot be spread properly.

There are many different ways in which children can spread health ideas and teach others good health practices.

Older children can help younger ones by:

- caring for them and teaching them
- showing them a good example.

Children can help others of the same age by:

- learning from each other through doing things together
- children who have been to school can help others who have not had the chance to do so.

Children can pass on health messages and take health action in their families and communities.

- Sometimes they can spread knowledge they have learned in school. For example, Mary learns about the importance of immunisation. Mother takes baby to be immunised.
- Sometimes they teach by example. For example, John makes a new toy for baby. Grandmother helps baby play with it.
- Sometimes they can work together to spread ideas and take action in the community.



For example, the health scouts make a fence around the well and hold a party afterwards.

Adapted from *Child to child: a resource book* Bonati G and Hawes H,
The Child-to-child Trust

Peer education is very similar and both approaches relate to a group of children gaining accurate information and understanding about a particular topic and then communicating this to other children. In this case, the term **peers** tends to involve children of the same age or status, and younger children, but peer educators have also taught or provided information to parents at home, and to other adults, including through public presentations in the community.

Peer education and child-to-child approaches in emergencies are used for: health, sanitation and water use information, food distribution, protection, explaining emergency processes and other areas. There are no limitations, and the process is useful for communicating accurate information quickly. In addition, children have been involved in peer education that consists of running classes for younger children in school, following the basic curriculum.

Community-based approaches with women

Key learning points

- Women have a right to be consulted and involved in decisions that affect them and their family. Sensitive efforts should always be made to advocate for the inclusion of women in community mobilisation.
- Community mobilisation for women in the protection of children is of particular importance because of their role in families, the contribution they can make and, in some cultures, their marginalisation.
- The mobilisation of women presents many challenges related to women's roles or the circumstances of their lives. Therefore specific efforts may be required to ensure their mobilisation.
- The mobilisation of women may require the development of parallel women's structures.
- There are many strategies for approaching the social mobilisation of women and the choice of strategy will be very situation dependent.

Why is the mobilisation of women particularly important?

CRC Article 18 establishes that primary responsibility for bringing up children rests equally with the child's parents. This same article also establishes the responsibility of the State to support the parents in meeting their responsibilities. The CRC places an obligation on both parents to guide and support children in the exercise of their rights, to take into account their evolving capacities, and to make sure that children's best interests are a primary consideration in decision making. Because of the particular nature of children's rights and the concept of children's evolving capacity, it can be useful to see parents as **co-claimants** in children's rights. This applies especially for



very young children, where it will be a parent, and most often the mother, who negotiates their child's access to health and education services.

In practice, mothers frequently take the central role in the care and protection of children and young people. Both as co-claimants in their children's rights and as individuals, women have a right to be consulted and involved in decisions that affect themselves and their family. In many societies women are still denied these rights and are under-represented in power structures and so community-based approaches that take a focus on working with women are of particular importance. Specific community-based approaches involving women can be justified as follows.

- In all societies, women play central roles in the care and upbringing of children.
- Women often have a fundamental role in areas important to family wellbeing such as control and management of water and food.
- Often women are more open-minded and flexible in their approach to problems. Experience shows that women often have a capacity to organise themselves and assume a leading role in community activities and decision making.
- Some protection issues affecting girls and women (such as personal security and sexual and gender-based violence) are clearly best dealt with by women themselves (see **Critical issue module 1** Abuse and exploitation).
- War and conflict often result in a dramatic increase in the number of female-headed families. New educational, income-generating, health (particularly reproductive health) and legal rights initiatives are more likely to be effective in meeting their needs if they are dealt with by women themselves.
- Women are likely to be important in ensuring long-term sustainability of initiatives.

On the other hand, involving women presents particular challenges and a context specific understanding of women's lives and their role before the emergency, as well as the impact the emergency has had on their lives, will be required in order to assess how best to facilitate their involvement. Some of these challenges include.

- An understanding of the precise issues and sensitivity towards gender roles in relation to cultural, religious or traditional norms is essential.
- Frequently it is men who make the decisions, even in areas of central concern to women, with women taking a secondary role.
- Women may feel overburdened by additional responsibilities, caring for extended family members in the case of death or separation or where their husbands are absent.
- Women's household responsibilities often limit their availability to attend community meetings. Meetings may not be organised at times convenient to them.
- The circumstances of women's lives may have been made much worse by the emergency and constant hardship, grinding poverty, continued threats to security and safety, an increase in domestic violence post emergency, if present, are likely to lead to exhaustion and leave little energy to take on additional roles.
- Women may lack self-confidence and literacy may be an issue in countries where women have been unable to access education and this may need to be taken into account in training and capacity building.



The changing roles of women

Women can take on very active roles in communities during emergencies. Experience from Latin America shows however that while this may be accepted during the emergency, there is an expectation from men that women will return to their traditional roles at a later stage. It has been found important to spend time reflecting with men and women in such communities about the potential for women to continue to take on leadership roles.

Foundation module 6 Community mobilisation adapted for Latin America

The example above shows the importance of continued dialogue and engagement with men, even (or especially) when the mobilisation of women is the key objective. The role of men in allowing or supporting long-term change in attitude towards women and girls is critical, as is their role in addressing issues related to gender discrimination, inequality or gender-based exploitation and violence.

Strategies for the mobilisation of women

Because of the patriarchal nature of most societies, women tend to have less social, economic and political power and are less well represented in formal leadership structures. Even though women constitute half of the population in society they often are overlooked in the social activities, including the community mobilisation process. They are often invisible during the assessment and planning processes.

Separately mobilising women can pose a threat to men if they see their status and decision making powers being challenged, and in some societies women have less freedom of movement than men, making social mobilisation difficult. Therefore a set of strategies should be taken to bring equity to the power relations.

One strategy may include negotiating mandatory representation of women and children in the different committees along with men. In some instances, it may be necessary to facilitate separate women's organisations or committees which operate in parallel to those of men, and careful work sometimes needs to be undertaken with male leaders to sensitise them to the need for women to be involved. However, the different approach strategies to mobilisation of women are context specific. Agencies will need to develop a sound understanding of the role of women within their own community in order to find ways of working which are effective but which also respect tradition, culture and religious beliefs. In many circumstances women are proactive, rapidly organise themselves and present many ideas – as has been seen women can, and often do, take on a leadership role in emergencies. In other situations where women face some of the challenges that have been noted above, agencies may have to provide active support, at least in the early stages. As women, hopefully, begin to adjust, they are likely to need less and less assistance as long as the support has been provided in a way that continues to promote independence and ownership. The following are some ideas to consider.

- Initial support to the process of mobilisation may be required, for example, identifying places for women to meet; providing information about or organising childcare or advocating for child friendly spaces (CFS) so women have the time to meet; helping to



identify any other constraints to women attending and seeking solutions (such as making sure the times of meetings allow all women to attend).

- Encourage the recruitment of female workers and community volunteers so that they can access and mobilise female groups.
- Use adolescent girls' groups as an entry point to access wider female groups.
- Motivate the leaders and power structure of the community on the value of women's participation and eventually encourage the representation of women in the community meetings.
- Create and promote traditional work opportunities which involve women's specific roles but at the same time are socially acceptable. For example, community childcare-centre childbirth monitoring, nursing and family income generation.
- Sharing cases and good practices of women's self-help projects, as well as their role in protection and promotion of child rights.
- Capacity building initiative appropriate to their educational and social status. Helping to facilitate meetings, taking notes and helping to develop an action plan, working with men's group to convince them about the essentiality of women's mobilisation in child protection are effective ways to mobilise them.

Community-based approaches in urban settings

Key learning points

- Refugees and displaced persons who have settled in urban settings, or who are dispersed within rural areas, may face particular difficulties and constraints due to losing the community link.
- The relationship between refugees and displaced persons in such situations and the local population may be characterised by particular tensions.
- In these situations, refugees and displaced persons may feel they belong neither to the local community, nor to the community of refugees and displaced persons.
- Context specific strategies will need to be developed to reach and involve host populations in these circumstances.

Refugees and IDPs who have settled in urban situations, or who are dispersed within rural areas, may face additional difficulties and constraints

The majority of people displaced from their homes or places of origin will live in a camp environment, either as IDPs or refugees, until they are able to return to their home or be permanently settled elsewhere. However, in some emergencies, quite significant numbers of people become dispersed in either urban or rural situations. These may be refugees who flee to another country, IDPs who may have moved far from their place of origin, or those who, perhaps as a result of losing their homes in a natural disaster, find shelter relatively close to where they were living, either in a town or city or in rural areas. In some circumstances, they are welcomed and accepted by the local population but in others they face particular difficulties. These may include some or all of the following points.



- Displaced persons may be dispersed and isolated within the host population: there may be barriers of language, cultural difference and political or racial hostility which can lead to a severe sense of alienation.
- Living conditions may be particularly difficult, with for instance, substandard accommodation and severe economic constraints.
- There may be an absence of leadership and traditional community structures.
- Although host populations may be initially open, welcoming and generous towards displaced persons, with the passing of time compassion fatigue may set in.
- Displaced persons can be perceived as competing for scarce resources or as posing a threat to the stability or security of the host community.
- Access to services such as education and health may be denied or restricted for legal or economic reasons.
- Where displaced persons are targeted for assistance which is not provided to the general population, this can create tensions among local people.

Displaced persons in these situations may have a very limited sense of belonging to a community.

Community mobilisation in an urban or non-camp setting can at times be especially challenging. Whereas a mass exodus and a camp situation can provide opportunities for the formation of new social relationships and communities, smaller or more staggered movements of people may result in their dispersal over an urban or rural area. A sense that they neither belong to a displaced community nor to the local community may mean that such populations are likely to feel increasingly isolated.

Community mobilisation initiatives can either focus on inclusive strategies that bring together local people and displaced persons or on the development of a sense of community among the displaced themselves. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and some strategies may combine both elements depending very much on the local situation.

Displaced persons who are scattered among the host population may be more difficult to reach by community-based approaches.

Although in some situations displaced persons may tend to concentrate in a particular area, in others they may be dispersed more randomly which makes them much more difficult to reach as they may be relatively invisible. They may not be settled in one place, frequently moving on in search of food or other resources or because of fear or hostility. Strategies to reach such populations may include the following.

- Identifying and using formal points of contact such as:
 - churches, mosques and temples
 - registration centres
 - distribution centres
 - hostels
 - schools.
- Identifying and using informal meeting places such as:
 - parks, open spaces, sports fields



- markets
- bars or eating places.
- By identifying traditional or new patterns of leadership it may be possible to work through them to locate refugees or displaced persons.
- Using mass media such as radio and television, notice boards and newspapers (especially if displaced persons produce their own or tend to read particular ones).
- **Walk and talk** approaches may also be helpful, by walking within areas where there are known to be displaced persons and observing, talking and listening. Attending particular occasions may also be appropriate, for example, football matches or celebrations.
- Accessing information from existing services such as health clinics, schools and distribution centres.

Different strategies can be adopted according to the particular needs and circumstances.

In some situations, a broad, inclusive strategy needs to be adopted which involves both those who are displaced and the host community. This may help to promote a sense of community which embraces displaced persons: encouraging positive interactions between them and the host community may help to dispel prejudice and hostility. If the provision of services is being offered, or if cooperative activities are being encouraged, such an approach may demonstrate that displaced persons can indirectly bring some positive benefits to the whole community. For example, in Latin America groups displaced by natural disaster worked together with the community they took refuge in to demand housing and with the support of NGOs this was finally provided by the local authorities. The humanitarian agencies working in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya on some occasions extended some of their services to the surrounding host community, who were also impoverished.

In other situations, especially in urban settings, it may be more realistic to focus on creating or facilitating opportunities for displaced persons to come together, with the aim of helping to create a sense of community and mutual support among them and to help build social capital. The creation of community centres can be helpful, for example, in providing opportunities for information sharing, group meetings, recreational and educational activities and so on. As far as possible, such initiatives should be undertaken by displaced persons themselves, with the minimum necessary external assistance. Where more than one ethnic group is present in a community it may be important to advocate for facilities and activities that span the groups and include them all rather than just the most active, or in some circumstances it may be necessary to ensure that there is the capacity for separate activities to be held for different ethnic groups or according to gender. Helping displaced persons to establish associations is another possible strategy. This might involve helping them to find suitable meeting places, develop means of communication such as newsletters, setting up various kinds of self-help activity and so on. Supporting the provision of formal or informal childcare, recreation or educational activities, where required, is a very effective way of bringing people together and promoting a sense of community.

Decisions about which approach to take will depend on a number of factors including the time the displaced persons are likely to remain where they are, the relationship between the displaced persons and host community and their circumstances, any



commonalities. For example, do they speak the same language or dialect? Are they all city dwellers? It should be emphasised again that these approaches are not mutually exclusive and some efforts to foster a sense of community between the host and displaced population is likely to be helpful, even if the main focus is on mobilising the displaced community.

Peace and reconciliation programmes following conflict emergencies have been a common approach to many humanitarian agencies. Often violence-torn conflict situations create hostility and mistrust amongst the communities, making the repatriation and return process by the refugees and IDPs hugely difficult. In those situations, the humanitarian agencies, along with government and law enforcing agencies, have sometimes played the mediation role between the two communities. Following a range of separate meetings the agencies have organised exchange visits between the representatives of both communities, which led to eventual reconciliation, and thus the return of the IDPs to their own community or resettlement villages.

In situations when the members of the community have lived together for many years, but due to a sudden violent event displacement took place, the process of reconciliation has been slightly easier. A powerful tool in such context is found to be the child-to-child community approach.

Following the agencies' efforts, children from both host and IDP communities have been engaged in the process of reconciliation. The agencies began to involve children in the common social activities together and thus facilitated the promotion of peace messages in the community. By ensuring a protective adult facilitation at the initial stage, the external agencies facilitate the child-to-child peace efforts in the earlier phases, with adequate precaution, often separately, without even physically bringing the children's groups from two hostile communities face to face. But initially, by facilitating the communication of the peace message to each other through, for example, letters or pictures. then by stepping forward with careful protective measures and by using child friendly approaches such as by organising sports and games where children from both communities took part. Eventually the united children's group from both communities, with the help of adults, have staged drama and street theatre both in front of the host and IDP communities. Through their performances they urged the communities to respond to peace message and reconcile.

Training material for this section

- Exercise 1** Mobilisation of children and young people
- Exercise 2** The importance of involving women
- Exercise 3** Community mobilisation for refugee women
- Exercise 4** Assessment in an urban setting
- Handout 1** Quiz questions
- Handout 2** Scenario
- Handout 3** What actually happened
- Handout 4** Scenario



Endnotes

- 1** Gubbels and Koss, 2000 p2
http://www.aidsalliance.org/graphics/NGO/documents/englishEnglish/152cap_building_roots_up.pdf
- 2** Taken from a definition of duty bearers in a UNICEF central and eastern Europe (CEE) training slideset.
- 3** This section has been adapted from *A community-based approach in UNHCR operations*.
- 4** This section has been adapted from pp 55 to 96 of *A community-based approach in UNHCR's operations*.
- 5** ARC resource and training material focuses particularly on rights-based responses to child protection risks. The following sequence of activities have been adapted from UNHCR's manual *A Community-based approach in UNHCR's operations* to be specific to children and their rights. This manual can be referred to for a broader coverage of protection issues in communities.
- 6** Adapted from *A community-based approach in UNHCR's operations* and *Save the Children's first line of protection*.



Further reading

- *Helping children outgrow war* USAID, 2002
- International Committee of the Red Cross
www.icrc.org
- International Save the Children Alliance
www.savethechildren.net
- *Learning to cope* Radda Barnen
(A short video produced by Radda Barnen and depicting the development of the school in a refugee camp for Somali refugees in Yemen. It illustrates the way in which the community was centrally involved in planning the school and the importance of the school as a community resource.)
- *Lessons learned in work with refugee women: a case study of Chiapas* Loxano I, UNHCR, Chiapas Mexico 1996
- *Making space for children – planning for post-disaster reconstruction with children and their families* Save the Children, 2006
- *Makwaya: dancing with hope* Save the Children US (video)
- *Organisation of Guatemalan refugee women: from refugees to returnees* Maquín M, Mamá Maquín, Comitán Mexico
- *Preventive health care among children and youth affected by armed conflict and displacement* Mahlasela J, Radda Barnen, Stockholm 1997
- *Protecting children's rights using community-based approaches – southern Sudan* Save the Children Sweden, 2007
- *Rising from the rubble – communities lead the earthquake response* Save the Children Sweden, 2006
- *Together – how communities in Côte d'Ivoire are protecting their children* Save the Children Sweden, 2006
- *Toolkits: a practical guide to assessment, monitoring, review and evaluation* Gosling L and Edwards M, Save the Children, London 2005
- UNICEF
www.unicef.org

