

Section 2: Note to Users

Effective training of facilitators is best done by or with people who have first-hand experience in using community-led approaches.

This section makes extensive use of participatory role-plays, with group reflection on the process and how to improve the facilitator's skills.

A useful approach, however, is to intermix these activities with the reflective activities promoted in Section 1. For example, if a person who is learning how to facilitate a community-led process shows during a role-play a need for additional practice regarding empathy or asking probing questions, one could have the participant complete that evening the relevant tools on empathy (FAC 4) and asking probing questions (FAC 6).

TRN 3. Differences Between Top-Down and Community-Led Approaches to Child Protection

Aspect or element	Top-down approach	Community-led approach
Views of community	Communities are seen typically as implementers or beneficiaries. Often communities are seen as needing education about child rights and child protection and as having harmful norms and traditional practices.	Communities are seen as collectives that have agency, social and cultural strengths, grounded experience caring for and bringing up children, and significant numbers of people who care about children's well-being.
Power	NGOs hold the power since it is they and their child protection experts who guide, manage, and provide the resources for the work on child protection. This power asymmetry is evident in language, since NGOs typically impose on communities a universalized language around child rights, child protection, and associated terms.	Communities hold the main power since they guide, manage, and control the work to support vulnerable children. Without skilled facilitation, it is primarily men in most communities that hold the power. Typically, communities do not use the vocabulary of child protection to speak of things that harm or are good for children.

Aspect or element	Top-down approach	Community-led approach
Role of NGOs and other outside actors	Typically, NGOs act as the experts who analyze the situation, choose the intervention, build capacities for implementation, and then manage the implementation of the intervention, and provide or organize monitoring and evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness. In most cases, the intervention is manualized or follows a protocol, and the NGO manages and directs the intervention, following well-articulated time schedules, logframes, results frameworks, etc.	Communities frequently plan and act on their own. Yet NGOs may have roles as facilitators who help communities engage in constructive, inclusive dialogue and problem-solving but who do not "lead" the community to a predefined endpoint such as child rights. NGOs may also help to build the capacities needed for designing and implementing the intervention, though they usually do so only if invited by the communities. The action is directed and managed by the community and follows "community time" and understanding of the results they want to see, without reference to logframes and manuals.
Actions/Interventions	Selected and designed by child protection specialists according to the issue to be addressed and child protection standards. The implementers are typically the NGO itself or a local CBO partner. Most ordinary people are not seen as having guided the selection of the issue, the selection of the intervention strategy, or its design and implementation.	The community itself defines the issue to be addressed, identifies the action strategy, and, possibly working with CBOs, NGOs, and/or Government actors, designs and implements the action. Usually, the work of selecting the issue and designing and implementing the action is not done by a small committee but by the full community, with ordinary people playing a prominent role.

Aspect or element	Top-down approach	Community-led approach
Strengths focus	The focus on existing community strengths is moderate yet may rely relatively little on existing community processes such as endogenous processes or traditional structures. The latter are viewed with skepticism since they may be sources of child protection risks.	Strong and at the forefront since the emphasis is on sustainable change and excessive focus on harms or risks can be seen by community people as one-sided or even disrespectful. Local community structures and practices are built on whenever possible, with child rights standards quietly used as a guide and social change strategies used to avoid harming children.
Inclusivity	Set as a goal but seldom approached rigorously. Under pressure for quick results, NGOs frequently do not take the time required to reach or engage with the most vulnerable children. Also, community decisions to partner with the NGO on children's protection may be taken following a handful of meetings that are dominated by people who are better off.	Works systematically to achieve high levels of inclusivity. Slow processes of dialogue and observation are used to analyze community dynamics, understand how community decisions are usually taken, and who is left out and why. Using strategies of slow dialogue, outreach to diverse people, and conscientization, communities themselves decide how to include people who do not usually participate in full community decision-making.
Child participation	Low to moderate levels of child participation are typically achieved since in most societies, adults are the decision-makers and holders of power. If children exert too much influence, adults may lash back with criticism or punishment. Where children are members of CWCs, they often wield relatively little power.	Children achieve high levels of participation. Through extended dialogue, adults become more aware of the value of children's views and recognize that particular community problems can only be addressed effectively with leadership by children. Through a social change process, adults willingly "make room at the table" for children.

Aspect or element	Top-down approach	Community-led approach
Initial engagement with community	Usually brief, consisting of several meetings and group discussions and organized around the questions and programming approach of the NGO. It typically does not entail extensive listening, and the discussion frequently centers around universalized categories of child protection concerns such as sexual exploitation and abuse, early marriage, violence against children, etc.	Usually a slow, extended process that involves extensive listening to and learning about the community. Efforts are made early on to not privilege the NGO or its terminology and concerns. The emphasis is on building trust and mutual respect, setting the stage for open learning about the community.
Assessment	Conducted by child protection specialists, assessments focus on child protection risks as defined by international standards. Some focus on protective factors is often included. The approach is judgmental in that it assumes that outside experts know what the key issues are and that local practices such as corporal punishment are harmful. Often the findings of the assessment are not fed back to the community.	Focuses on flexible, open-ended learning rather than on pre-defined questions. The learning approach, which could include methods such as ethnography and participatory ranking, invites local people to “teach us” and is non-judgmental in tone and approach. International terms are avoided, and emphasis is placed on community strengths and also community power dynamics. Local people are viewed as co-learners and, with training, may help to collect data. The findings are shared with the community in a respectful, appropriate manner.

Aspect or element	Top-down approach	Community-led approach
Monitoring & evaluation	Monitoring is conducted by the NGO. Evaluations are organized by the NGO, and conducted by specialists, who may include commissioned research groups. When participatory methods are used, the focus is often on questions formulated by child protection specialists.	Monitoring is done by the community via agreed-upon processes and space for reflection and making adjustments in the action. Communities also evaluate the action using various methods that they decide upon. External evaluations may also be conducted and frequently include locally derived outcome indicators. Evaluation data are shared in a simple, appropriate manner with community people, who discuss the implications of the findings.

