

Section 4: Note to Users

The tools in this section invite managers and other users to reflect critically on their agency's approach to engaging with communities and to consider a more community-led approach.

It also recognizes that many managers will have a host of practical questions about things such as qualities to look for in facilitators, the phases of engaging with communities, and the kinds of benchmarks one can use to tell whether one is on a productive track, among others.

Recognizing that there are no "final" or universal answers to these questions, the tools in this section seek to give illustrative examples that stir the imagination and invite one to think how it might go in a particular context.

Managers also may find it useful to have a more in-depth look at an example of community-led work, together with tools that were used to support it. For this reason, this section includes a case study from Sierra Leone and some of the tools used as part of the community-led work.

It is important to recognize, though, that there is no one-size-fits-all in regard to community-led approaches. The Sierra Leone example and tools are best seen as illustrations and should not be seen as prescriptions for how to do community-led work.

MGM 1. Questions for Reflection by Managers and Agencies

Enabling community-led work is not just a different approach to child protection but rather a transformational one. As Chapter 3 of the accompanying Guide points out, we first have to change ourselves and our agencies before we are in a good position to take a community-led approach. Each agency has its own organizational culture and modalities of change.

Nevertheless, one of the best pathways toward change is collective reflection, which involves an honest stock taking of our approach to engaging with communities, an admission of our current limitations as well as strengths, and openness to change.

The box below presents questions to begin the process of agency reflection and change. It is suggested that managers of child protection teams, groups of child protection workers, or both, meet in a quiet place with few distractions to discuss these questions. Or, recognizing that there is no universal recipe for organizational change, you may want to start by exploring a particular issue (e.g., how to achieve sustainability) that currently galvanizes much discussion within your agency, examining how that issue relates to how one engages with communities.

Questions for Group Reflection Within Your Agency

- What does my agency get out of presenting itself as an expert on child protection and describing itself as using the latest, state-of-the-art interventions?
- How are my agency's approach and work with communities respectful and humble? How are they less than respectful and humble?
- How does my agency view communities? As “Well-intentioned but uneducated and saddled with backward beliefs and practices that harm children”? Or does the agency see them more as agents who already do quite a lot to help children?
- How trustful is my agency of community processes for supporting vulnerable children?
- How willing is my agency to put power for decision-making in the hands of communities?
- How does my agency benefit through the use of logframes and timetables, most of which are predetermined? How does this affect community power?
- Communities sometimes tell us what they think we want to hear. Sometimes we talk mainly with people in the community who like partnering with outside NGOs. If we could get beyond these biases and enable people to speak freely, how do you think community people see your agency and its projects?

A valuable element of the discussion is to follow one's curiosity, as good questions and discussions tend to awaken other important questions. One need not feel overwhelmed by the proliferation of questions, as reflection itself is valuable. Also, it is unproductive to press for immediate, easy answers, which tend to fall apart in the face of the complexities associated with child protection work. Habits of reflection and open discussion need to find a home in one's agency if it is to support facilitators and enable communities to develop their own solutions.