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.
Note: This tool provides an indicative overview of the various phases of the community-led work. However, it is not intended to be a checklist or template for all community-led work. Also, it is important to note that in practice, the process is often more circular than linear, with extensive overlap between different phases and steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Benchmarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency preparation</td>
<td>Promote coordination and buy-in from different actors</td>
<td>Discussions with relevant coordination groups and Government actors</td>
<td>Different stakeholders, including the Government, buy into and support the community-led work</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2–3 months)</td>
<td>Help the agency prepare for this process</td>
<td>Agency senior managers learn about community-led approach</td>
<td>NGO decides to use a community-led approach</td>
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<td>Agency reflection meetings on changed role and modalities of work</td>
<td>NGO makes needed adjustments in human resources, program approach, and child safeguarding procedures</td>
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<td>Hiring and initial, week-long training of facilitators</td>
<td>NGO formulates its boundary rules and intervention criteria</td>
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<td>Agency thinks through issues of ethics and child safeguarding in regard to community-led approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning about the</td>
<td>Learn deeply about the community and the perspectives of many different</td>
<td>Meet with chief, elder men and women, youth leaders, etc. to explain purpose and approach</td>
<td>Authentic spirit of trust and co-learning with the community develops</td>
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<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>Use a nonjudgmental, participatory, open-ended approach to learning</td>
<td>Community validates the learning findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2–3 months)</td>
<td>Establish respect and trust with the community</td>
<td>Analyze the data with close attention to participants’ narrative and direct observation</td>
<td>Community begins to reflect on what they could do to address the harms to children that were identified</td>
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<td>Feed findings back to the community</td>
<td>Community agrees to continue thinking about action with the agency</td>
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| Planning, issue selection (7–12 months) | Enable the communities to select which harm(s) to children to address  
Enable inclusive community planning on which harm to children to address  
Enable meaningful child participation | Mentors are hired and oriented  
The community holds open meetings to discuss which harm(s) to children to address  
The community discusses how to create a more inclusive process  
If the community decides to have small group discussions, those begin, with representatives feeding key points back to the community discussions  
If the community decides to collaborate with other communities, then it decides how joint planning will occur  
Throughout, the facilitator enables a process of slow dialogue, collective reflection, and joint decision-making  
Communities decide whether they want to collaborate with formal stakeholders  
Facilitators and mentors check on appropriateness and feasibility of linkages and collaboration with district or provincial authorities  
Iterative discussions at different levels continue until wide agreement has been achieved | First community planning discussion is held  
Community recognizes the limits of open community discussions  
Community decides how to create an inclusive process  
Highly inclusive process for choosing the issue is established  
Small group and inter-community planning groups form, if relevant  
Individual communities develop a shortlist of the most important harms to children to address  
Communities select which harm(s) to children to address  
Transition plan for facilitator and agency is developed |
| Action planning (2 months) | Enable inclusive community planning on a community-led action  
Enable meaningful child participation | Facilitators and mentors receive training on action planning  
Continue the community, small group, and inter-community dialogue processes as above but with a focus on the communities’ action  
Communities explore whether they want to adjust the representation on the inter-community process | Highly inclusive process for communities deciding which action to take in addressing the selected harm(s) to children  
Community develops action plan that fits with the broad intervention criteria  
MoU signed with community-selected |
| **Action (ongoing)** | • Enable inclusive participation in the community-led action  
• Enable meaningful child participation | • Communities decide whether they want to have particular trained subgroups (e.g., Peer Educators, Parents’ Group, Youth Group, etc.) lead or conduct work on particular aspects of the action  
• Communities decide which formal stakeholders to collaborate with  
• Meetings with formal stakeholders regarding how they could collaborate with the communities and support the community-led action | formal stakeholders who will collaborate with the communities on the action  
• Highly inclusive process for communities implementing their action plans for addressing the selected harm(s) to children  
• Communities receive needed capacity building per their plans  
• Formal stakeholders do their part to support the action |
| is | Collect empirical data on the effectiveness of the action, with comparison of baseline and endline data | Near its exit time, the external agency conducts a participatory evaluation that includes data on outcomes for children | Learning from both the community-led and the external evaluations are fed back to communities, who decide on adjustments |