

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 4. Phases, Objectives, Steps, and Benchmarks

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.

Phase	Objective	Steps	Benchmarks
Agency preparation (2–3 months)	- Promote coordination and buy-in from different actors - Help the agency prepare for this process	- Discussions with relevant coordination groups and Government actors - Agency senior managers learn about community-led approach - Agency reflection meetings on changed role and modalities of work - Hiring and initial, week-long training of facilitators - Agency thinks through issues of ethics and child safeguarding in regard to community-led approach	- Different stakeholders, including the Government, buy into and support the community-led work - NGO decides to use a community-led approach - NGO makes needed adjustments in human resources, program approach, and child safeguarding procedures - NGO formulates its boundary rules and intervention criteria
Learning about the community (2–3 months)	- Learn deeply about the community and the perspectives of many different people - Establish respect and trust with the community	- Meet with chief, elder men and women, youth leaders, etc. to explain purpose and approach - Use a nonjudgmental, participatory, open-ended approach to learning - Analyze the data with close attention to participants' narrative and direct observation - Feed findings back to the community	- Authentic spirit of trust and co-learning with the community develops - Community validates the learning findings - Community begins to reflect on what they could do to address the harms to children that were identified - Community agrees to continue thinking about action with the agency

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

		- 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
Action (ongoing)	- Enable inclusive participation in the community-led action - Enable meaningful child participation	- Facilitators receive training on their changing role, the transition process, and documentation - Community chooses and receives capacity building as needed - Community develops and implements its own messages and activities (e.g., role-plays, community drama and discussion, campaigns, parents' discussions, meetings with school officials, etc.) - Space is included for impromptu supporting activities - Community monitors its activities and adherence to its action plan, making adjustments as needed - Mentors or agency staff monitor the support by formal actors, advocating with them as needed	- 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
Evaluation	Take stock of how inclusive and community owned the action process	Communities hold periodic meetings to reflect on the action process and how to make improvements or address challenges that have arisen	- Narrative data on the action process, benefits, and challenges - Data on actual outcomes for children

	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
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