

Alternatives to Camps

Making It Work

Good Practice and Guidance Series



Tanzania/UNHCR/Brendan Bannon/ 2009



Key Action #5: Strengthening Community-Based Protection

THE POLICY SAYS

Implementation of UNHCR's *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* requires strengthening community-based protection, monitoring, outreach and case management, including increased direct engagement with refugee and host communities. UNHCR operations may strengthen community-based protection through:

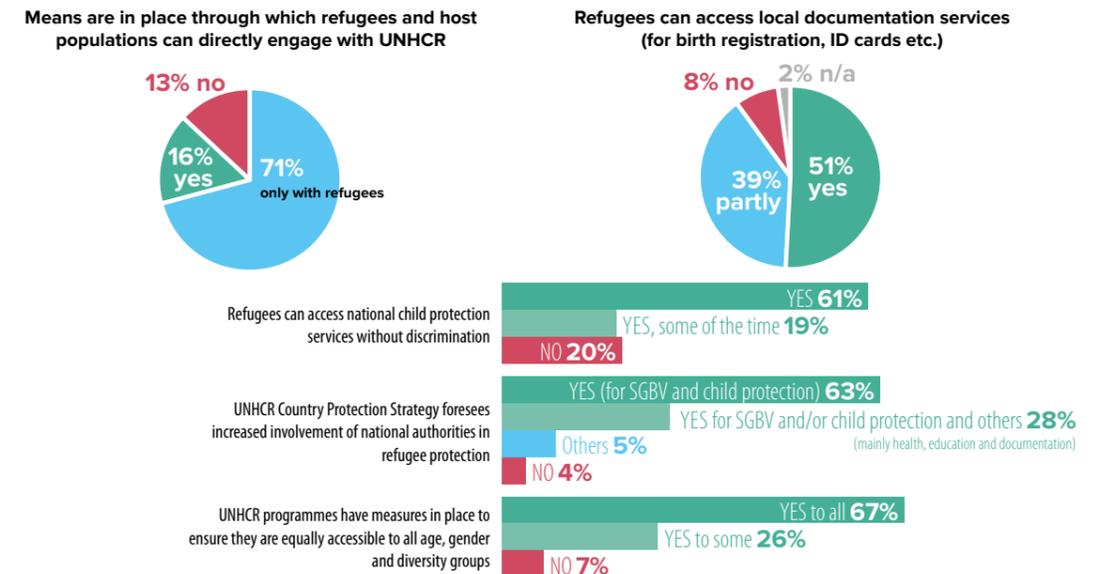
- mobile monitoring teams;
- community centers;
- co-location of government, UNHCR and partner services ("one-stop shops"); and by using
- virtual platforms to facilitate information sharing and two-way communication.

Adopting these approaches in UNHCR operations advances refugee rights by promoting inclusion in host communities and services, helping overcome the challenges that arise when refugees are not living in camps, and ensuring that refugees with specific needs - including children and victims of sexually based gender violence - do not remain hidden.

KEY ACTION #5: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

The Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps

The *2016 Global Results of the Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps*¹ suggest that, while nearly 90% of UNHCR country operations have mechanisms in place that allow refugees to directly engage with UNHCR, only some 16% have similar managements in place for host communities to directly engage with UNHCR.



Key Tips and Actions

Key Action #5 on Strengthening Community-Based Protection of the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* should be implemented together with the other Key Actions of the Policy in order to address alternatives to camps in a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing way, and also fulfil our commitment to be accountable to persons of concern.

- Community-based protection is a process, not a project. Do not rush the process of building trust and engagement, as it requires regular and consistent involvement and communication with the community.
- Every community that faces threats develops forms of self-protection. It is important to identify and map them. Promote sustainability from the start by supporting and working with existing community structures whenever possible. Community-based protection mechanisms enable people of concern to exercise their rights and meet their own needs.
- Select community counterparts with care. Do not rely solely on people who are easy to reach, such as self-proclaimed leaders. Make sure you communicate with persons of different age, gender and other backgrounds, including marginalized groups, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation.
- Engage affected communities in decision-making processes through the establishment of clear pathways for the informed, meaningful participation of crisis-affected communities; recognizing inherent differences due to age, gender and diversity.
- Ensure transparency by providing persons of concern, including marginalized groups, with accessible and up-to date information on UNHCR and partner programmes.
- Ensure that the priorities and needs of persons of concern are fully reflected in all strategies and programme interventions by providing multiple avenues to allow persons of concern to provide feedback/complaints about UNHCR and partner programmes.
- Use feedback provided by persons of concern to inform decisions on UNHCR programming, and report back to the communities the changes or decisions (both positive and negative) made as a result of this feedback.



Young Syrian refugees participate in drama workshop on the topic of early marriage, at the Mazboud Community Center Chouf. The center, run by NGO INTERSOS and supported by UNHCR, provides services to refugees, focussing on areas such as child protection initiatives and sexual and gender based violence. © UNHCR/Jordi Matas

Highlights from the Field

COMMUNITY CENTRES IN EGYPT

UNHCR in Egypt works through community centres run by local refugee organizations with the main objective of empowering refugees and providing them with the means to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Programmes in the centres include vocational training, primary education, language and literacy classes, recreational and cultural activities, handicraft classes, awareness raising on issues affecting refugees, counselling and basic psychosocial support, and case management. The community centers are a key location to receive information on UNHCR and other partners' interventions and services, through posters, videos and regular direct interaction with staff.

Several centres play an important role in promoting peaceful coexistence between communities by welcoming refugees from different nationalities who run and participate in programmes together. As a safe space for refugees to gather and exchanges ideas and concerns, the community centres have proven to be a catalyst for initiatives taken directly by refugees. Examples of refugee initiatives include the development of a kindergarten curriculum in one community centre, and the collection and distribution of winter clothes amongst community members in another.

Community centres also act as hubs which are used by different actors and service providers, including international and local NGOs, but also by the Ministry of Health during special events like polio sensitization campaigns. This has fostered increased collaboration and complementarity between them.

REFUGEE OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS IN LEBANON

Through its Refugee Outreach Volunteer (ROV) programme, UNHCR Lebanon has been seeking to address the large-scale and dispersed nature of the refugee population in Lebanon by promoting direct contact with refugees and turning to refugees to play a greater role in their own protection. The role of ROVs is to provide insight into their communities' capacities and protection priorities/solutions, to assist in the identification of persons at risk, to disseminate information about services and programmes to their communities, and to contribute to the assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of protection and assistance programmes.

ROVs permanent presence in, and knowledge of the communities, enables timely response to serious protection issues facing individuals across a wide geographic area, and empowers refugee volunteers involved in the programme, including youth and persons with disabilities. In addition, the ROVs are an invaluable source of information for UNHCR on the protection needs of refugees and an efficient mechanism for two-way communication between UNHCR and the wider refugee community. This leads to increased accountability and improved trust and cohesion between UNHCR and refugees, as well as among refugees themselves.

Tools and Guidance

The below documents can be found on the intranet page for [Alternatives to Camps](#).

- **Understanding Community-Based Protection.**¹ Sets out key lessons that have emerged in recent years during the delivery of Community Based Protection. It aims to help UNHCR staff and partners at all levels to integrate community-based approaches to protection in their humanitarian work.
- **UNHCR Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations.**² This guide emphasizes that by placing people of concern at the centre of operational decision-making, and building protection strategies in partnership with them, they will be better protected, their capacities to identify, develop and sustain solutions will be strengthened, and the resources available will be used more effectively.
- **Need To Know Guidance series.** These notes provide guidance on a range of issues to consider in meeting the specific needs and particular forms of discrimination faced by the following groups in forced displacement: [persons with disabilities](#)³; [LGBTI persons](#)⁴; [older persons](#)⁵; [men & boys survivors of SGBV](#)⁶; [national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples](#)⁷
- **UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations.**⁸ This tool outlines a series of steps to follow for conducting a participatory assessment with refugees or other persons of concern.
- **UNHCR Emergency Handbook: Community-Based Protection entry.**⁹ Includes an overview of community-based protection, as well as key points and practical tips on how to implement it in emergency situations.
- **“Community-Based Protection in Action” thematic briefs.** These thematic briefs aim to support the operationalization of community-based protection. Brief #1: [Community-Based Outreach Outside of Camps](#)¹⁰. Brief #2: [Community Centers](#)¹¹. Brief #3: [Effective and Respectful Communication in Forced Displacement](#)¹².

1 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5209f0b64.html>
 2 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/47da54722.html>
 3 <http://www.unhcr.org/4ec3c81c9.pdf>
 4 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4e6073972.pdf>
 5 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4ee72aaf2.pdf>
 6 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5006aa262.html>
 7 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ee72a2a2.html>
 8 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/462df4232.pdf>
 9 <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/50479/community-based-protection>
 10 <http://www.unhcrexchange.org/topics/15192/contents/198601>
 11 <http://www.unhcrexchange.org/topics/15192/contents/198603>
 12 <http://www.unhcrexchange.org/communities/9159/contents/215098>

Call for Good Practices

If your operation is implementing successful community-based protection practices related to alternatives to camps, we invite you to share these with us to help improve organization-wide methods. Send your examples by e-mail to hqatc@unhcr.org or upload material on the community-based protection community of practice: <http://www.unhcrexchange.org/communities/9159>

More Information

Please contact HQTS00@unhcr.org or visit <http://www.unhcrexchange.org/communities/9159> for more information on strengthening community-based protection.



One day activity organized by Saint Joseph University student with the ROVs in order to strengthen relations between youth from host and refugee communities. The activity included Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis and Sudanese. November 2015 / UNHCR/Salameh