



Background Note

Community Based Social Media Influencers

Introduction

Traditionally, UNHCR operations have a wealth of experience engaging with community stakeholders as a key component of their Community Based Protection strategy. This can include, inter alia, working with elected community leadership structures, youth leaders, women's group representatives etc. In many contexts where UNHCR works, community members are using social media to communicate, share ideas and access information. For some community members, social media is a preferred and trusted communication tool. Within such communities, some individuals build large online networks, and are able to have significant influence across social media channels. These influencers (with approximately 1,000 - 5,000 followers) are often called 'nano-influencers' or even 'nanos'.

These 'influencers' are often able to bridge online/offline worlds, reflecting offline realities in their online content - for example videos filmed locally, content using local vernacular and responses to 'real life' incidents. Through their proximity - and creation of relevant and engaging content - such influencers are often able to build trust and shape narratives within communities, at scale. Coming from the community themselves, these influencers can connect on an emotive level, creating nuanced content that has significant resonance with the communities they work with.

Context

Working with community-based social media influencers has the potential to strengthen UNHCR's ability to build trust in a community by working to support community-led content creation, sharing and response to community engagements. However, working with social-media influencers is not without its challenges - often relating to selection, due diligence, the risk of reinforcing entrenched inequalities through stereotypes and the exclusion of minority voices.

At a global level, the Division of External Relations has also developed significant experience engaging with influencers online - from those with thousands of followers to 'nanos'. This knowledge is being fed into the development of a toolkit to support UNHCR operations with their influencer engagement. While initially this engagement focused on External Relations - including through Private Sector Partnerships - a number of UNHCR operations have started to engage with such nano influencers to strengthen Community Based Protection Approaches. These initiatives include engaging 'nanos' at a national or more local level i.e. within a specific settlement/camp, generating creative and engaging content for diverse audiences.

The Innovation Service - with support from the Division of External Relations - would like to learn from operations wanting to test the emerging practice of leveraging nano influencer networks in support of protection outcomes.

Scope and Objectives

In the offline world, identification of 'community representatives' and community stakeholders usually follow extensive mapping/assessment and transparent selection processes. These mapping processes aim to identify stakeholders from across the diversify of a community - ensuring focal points are identified to represent the most marginalized groups. Community stakeholders are often supported with capacity and skills building and equipped with 'toolkits' to support them with their community engagement. Often training covers protection issues, referral, specific topics i.e. public health, education - this includes regular refresher training sessions. Engagement between key community focal points, partners and UNHCR is frequent - often daily. This experience can be translated online, as UNHCR's community-based protection strategies embrace online communities. There are of course some caveats to the direct translation of Community Based approaches online, which will require oversight and monitoring. Nonetheless, similar strategies of identification of individuals (ensuring AGD representation and inclusivity) as well as capacity building and mentoring can be adopted.

Supporting community stakeholders in the online world would include capacity building on key social media concepts linked to source verification, information validation, data protection, privacy, expectation management. It could also extend to content creation - covering topics linked to the use of audio-visual content, inclusive design, recognition of personal/content bias, and user-testing modalities. It would also include how to support influencers to recognize and appropriately refer protection concerns flagged via their networks or directly.

Application

The Innovation Service has received requests for support from operations wanting to test modalities to identify and support community-based social media influencers. As such, the Innovation Service has developed this 'Challenge' to support operations to develop creative solutions to working with online community stakeholders. The successful proposal will secure resources to support:

1. The establishment of a multi-functional project team i.e. Protection, Public Information, ICT PSP, colleagues to build on the comparative advantages across the different functions.
2. The mapping and identification of nano influencers within the community who would be able to represent and reach different AGD groups i.e. through a mapping across relevant channels and in collaboration with the GoodWill Ambassador team in DER. This can be at a national/local level as determined;
3. Development of an engagement strategy for identified influencers - including how the selection/engagement will be communicated within the community;
4. Completion of due diligence /vetting processes before full engagement with identified influencers;
5. Planning and implementation of capacity building with 'influencers' (online/in-person as feasible) - i.e. on multimedia content creation, safeguarding and code of conduct, data privacy and protection, diversity and inclusion, and expectation management;
6. Development of linkages with UNHCR's broader influencer work i.e. at a national, regional and/or global level and;
7. Roll-out, monitoring and evaluation of activities across the nano influencer network.

To submit an Expression of Interest to this challenge click the Apply Now button
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