



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A SUMMARY TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

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WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement (CE) is a community-driven approach to development where community members themselves identify problems & use available resources to plan & implement solutions and share results. By taking a major role in decision-making, community members keep ownership of process & outcomes, thus leading to more trust in their neighbours & partners, more

sustainable outcomes & more confidence that they can face future challenges.

Community engagement is an approach to programming and operations, it is the process by which community and organizations collectively build ongoing, permanent relationships for social benefits and outcomes.

CE is built around involving those affected in understanding the risks they face and involves them in deciding on the response they see appropriate and acceptable

Linking the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness of the diverse community members within any community.

Community engagement can take many forms, and partners can include organized groups, agencies, institutions, or individuals. Collaborators may be engaged on different topics such as protection of children from diseases/violence, school retention, promoting healthy behaviours, WASH, health promotion, research, policy making, etc....

- Communities must be at the heart of important public interventions, especially during emergencies and outbreaks
- It is critical to know and understand communities in order to effectively work with them
- Multiple strategies and tactics should be used to engage communities

WHAT TRIGGERS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement can be triggered through several ways as follows:

(1) National issue/priority/emergency

CE can be initiated in response to a national policy, national priority or national emergency that requires a specific intervention all over the country or in specific areas. Like responding to a disease outbreak in the country, or increasing the rates of preschool enrolment.

(2) Community specific issue

CE can be initiated as a response to a specific problem/issue facing a community and can start from the community members themselves. Like responding to cases of water contamination in a specific geographical area, or cases of high school drop outs in a neighbourhood.

WHY IS CE IMPORTANT?

(1) Leads to better, more effective programming

Listening to people's needs and opinions, and involving them in designing and delivering programmes, helps to properly understand the situation and people's priorities, which leads to more responsive, relevant and sustainable programmes.

(2) Improves acceptance and trust

Open and honest communication with communities about who we are and what we are doing builds trust and sets respect, help address rumours leading to enhanced acceptance by communities. Demonstrating more transparency and accountability in the way decisions are made.

(3) Empowers people, builds community resilience, and build consensus

With the right information, people can make informed decisions, find answers to their problems and connect with others to organize their own response – all of which builds long- term community resilience. It also ensures that decisions are responsive to the community's expressed needs and desires, creating opportunities to build consensus around decisions, which may reduce conflict. Community members will acquire new skills while participating through the CE process. Moreover, creating committees and organizing the community around one project will enable them to appropriately adapt to other existing or emerging issues. Bringing together diverse members within the community ensures dialogue and builds consensus.

(4) Supports positive behaviour and social change

Simply providing information about an issue is not enough to change behaviours. Involving people in the identification of the issue/problem will help them to understand factors leading to it and the consequences resulting if not resolved. Furthermore, letting them figure out solutions that they judge as feasible and acceptable will increase the chance to adopt safer and healthier practices. CE provides innovative approaches to better understand and engage with communities, and help them adopt safer and healthier behaviours and practices.

(5) Recognizes the community as experts and partners

Local people are the most knowledgeable about their situation and have a right to be active partners in the development, relief and recovery of their communities. Drawing on that knowledge and expertise through active participation and feedback can build community resilience and ensure successful programming.

(6) Helps to manage communities' expectations and ensure ownership

Dialogue with communities is essential in order to anticipate their needs, understand their circumstances and priorities and manage their expectations in relation to what they expect. When the community is involved in a project, they have ownership of it and the decision-making process, work hard to ensure achieving results.

HOW TO SELECT LOCAL PARTNERS?

In every community, some individuals have more influence than others. These individuals can be government officials, head of a religious or political group, the shaweesh, the head of a civil society group, a wealthy businessman, members of an influential family, & so on. They are often referred to as “gatekeepers” because they can influence community-level activities positively or negatively—they can either open or close the gate!

During assessment phase, key influential people should be identified and turned from gatekeepers into partners. Partners would use their influence or resources to help community-initiated activities. They can offer time, financial or material resources, and clear road blocks during implementation, or publicly endorse community events.

HOW ARE HUMAN RIGHTS ADDRESSED IN CE?

Human rights approaches mean giving particular attention to the most discriminated against & excluded groups within a society: women, minorities, children with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, indigenous peoples & others.

In most community-oriented approaches, marginalized people are identified as beneficiaries & their participation is limited to voicing their “needs” & following advice from development programs designed to help. In a community engagement approach, the role of marginalized people is different: they are actively involved in decision making by being engaged in all steps of CE process, equally to their neighbours.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CYCLE

There are four main phases for the community engagement cycle

- (1) Phase 1: Preparation
- (2) Phase 2: Assessment (community led assessment and problem identification, and prioritization)
- (3) Phase 2: Design and Planning
- (4) Phase 3: implementation and monitoring
- (5) Phase 4: Evaluation



PHASE 1: PREPERATION

This first phase is the groundwork for starting the community engagement process. It starts with **Mapping of Key stakeholders: identification of partners, leaders, influentials, and marginalized groups** that would take part in the planning and implementing the CE process. This phase also includes planning start up meetings, and meetings with local leaders, service providers and others who may be important for the CE process. As well as, selecting and training volunteers that will help in the CE process.

PHASE 2: ASSESSMENT

This phase is based on understanding the problem and factors contributing to its existence. The community-as- partner model is a guide to assess communities with a main focus on people at the centre, influenced by several subsystems that should be all evaluated



The community assessment wheel, the assessment of segments of the community-as- partner model¹

There are a mix of approaches to get the right picture including:

- (1) **Search and review existing information** (secondary data) available about the problem/issue
Information is always available, lots of secondary data, research reports, and activities are available that can be of great value and can provide valuable insights and information that would be essential for understanding the problem, analysing root causes and coming up with possible solutions.
- (2) **Use a wide range of assessment tools** that can help us understand the problem, like:
 - A. **Mapping**, a tool that can be used to tell a story about what is happening in communities, it can be used to identify “hot spots” which can be extremely useful in targeting interventions.
 - B. **Community meetings**: a community meeting is either a formal or informal public gathering that brings together local residents to discuss issues, voice concerns, and express preferences for community priorities. In these meetings, discussions are around issues related to the community’s strengths and potential challenges.
 - C. **SWOT analysis**, a technique for understanding Strengths and Weaknesses, and identifying both the Opportunities and the Threats. SWOT analysis is designed to facilitate a realistic, fact-based, data-driven look at the situation or problem the community is facing.

¹ Retrieved from: Anderson, E., Mcfarlane, J., (2011). *Community as Partner: Theory and Practice in Nursing*. Lipincott. 6th Edition. Page 176.

- D. **Problem tree analysis**, A problem tree analysis is a pictorial representation of a problem, its causes and its consequences. This analysis tool helps the project team get a quick glance of how a range of complex issues contribute toward a problem and how this problem branches out into a set of consequences.
- E. **Participatory action research (PAR)** an approach to research in communities that emphasizes participation and action. It seeks to understand the world by trying to change it, collaboratively and following reflection. PAR emphasizes collective inquiry and experimentation grounded in experience and social history. Within a PAR process, "communities of inquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers."
- F. **Child Led Data Collection tool** is a group of young researchers formed to carry out data collection on child rights issues within the frame work of UNICEF programs priorities for child protection, education, health and Nutrition and WASH within their location.
- G. **Windshield Survey**: are observations of the community characteristics made by driving a car or by walking. It is used to assess general community needs – to estimate the poverty level, for example – or to examine more specific facets of the community’s physical, social, or economic character

(3) **Plan and undertake Studies and Surveys** to better understand the problem and its magnitude. Several types can be used, most commonly Qualitative and Quantitative methods (In Depth Interviews, and Focus Group Discussions).

Depending on this situation, problem, capacities and timeframe CE planners and community members involved in the process can decide on the best tools and methods to carry out the assessment phase. The proposed list of tools is not exhaustive and other tested tools the partners have can be used. Annex 1 provides a tool for facilitating participatory assessments.

PHASE 3: DESIGN AND PLANNING

During this phase, data from assessment phase and previous learnings will be used to design the CE program, providing equal opportunities to everyone to participate in the planning process. Ensuring proper representation of different groups affected and targeted, vulnerable and marginalized groups. At this stage, clear roles and responsibilities need to be agreed with representatives and community leaders.

Clear objectives are essential to an effective community engagement process. They comprise the goals that are required to achieve the purpose. It is important to spend time developing objectives and to get them right, because the expectations of both the program implementors and the community will be built on these objectives. Clear objectives do not suggest rigidity of purpose; once an engagement process has begun, community members may see new purposes that emerge through the engagement process. It is helpful to revisit the objectives occasionally throughout the engagement period to see if they are still valid and/or if adjustments need to be made.

- **Goal:** is a long-term aim that requires several projects to attain it e.g. decrease the mortality rate of children aged 0-5 years in this city by 20% within 2 years
- **Specific objective:** actions necessary to achieve a specific short-term project or activity. It is stated in term of the facilitator abilities. Represents what it is intended to be done. E.g. discuss with 80 % of mothers 5 preventive factors to children mortality.
- **Expected outcome:** describe the desired behaviour or changes that will be required to achieve the main goal. It is the result that should be seen, on the

Clear audiences/Who will you Engage? Are essential to an effective CE process, we need to understand well who we are targeting and what affects their decision-making process, what media do they trust and follow and how do they make their essential decisions.

The CE activities and approaches will depend on what you want to achieve and who you need to reach. Represent all that should be done to move the community from the actual status (problem) toward the designated expected outcome. Different communication channels will work better for different objectives, while different audiences will access and trust different communication channels. The key is to select a range of activities and channels that can work together to achieve the CE objectives and support the wider programme aims.

CE implementation plan including specific objectives, activities, timelines and budgets need to be drafted setting out all activities required to handle the problem, what we need to engage and communicate on, with whom, how and when. The CE Plan will also need to establishing a system to listen, collect, analyse, respond to and act on feedback and complaints during the implementation of the program.

To develop the plan, we need to look at the following components

- (1) What is the problem? What are the root causes of the problem? How long has this problem existed? What has been done in the past? What worked, what didn't work, what are the benefits of fixing it? What are the consequences if left unresolved?
- (2) Which community members are most affected by this problem?
- (3) What are the solutions? activities? What can we do about this problem now? Who are possible partners—local leaders, local organizations, service providers such as teachers, health providers, WASH technicians
- (4) Who will do these activities? Who will be responsible for implementation? Which community member(s)? NGOs? Local groups? Others? who will take the lead?
- (5) When will the implementation happen? For each activity, a realistic timeline for each step need to be set
- (6) Budget and resource mobilization: a clear budget need to be developed covering all activities in the plan and estimations for additional required resources that are not in hand. This will need to be followed by a resource mobilization plan, and how the additional resources will be collected.

The plan matrix is listed below

Objectives							
Activity	Outcomes	Timeline				Responsibility	Budget
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		

Annex 2, provides a list of questions that needs to be answered during the process of development of the plan.

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The implementation phase is a crucial step in the community engagement process, it is the interesting part of the process, where all the plans are put into action, it is basically the translation of the dreams into reality. **This is usually the most time-consuming part of the process.**

Few important points to keep in mind during implementation are:

- **Manging expectations**, ensuring that community members and beneficiaries are well aware of what this CE project will bring to them, so that they are not disappointed by the end of the project
- **Adjusting activities**, we learn a lot during implementation based on monitoring, feedback and learning, it is crucial to adjust plans based on learnings
- **Monitoring of implementation** is key and is a cornerstone to the success of the project, you need to monitor activities as they happen.
- At this time and before starting implementation, make sure to collect **baseline data** to document knowledge, attitudes and practices before and after the CE project, so you can measure progress through comparing base line and post data.
- **Recognize and respect diversity**; and ensure that the most vulnerable are reached and engaged.

Monitoring of the implementation is a key success to achieving results.

PHASE 5: EVALUATION

To close the community engagement process, and to make sure that any learnings are captured, it is important to evaluate the process and the results that were achieved. Evaluation is important to understanding the overall impact of the program, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. Evaluations provide useful learning for what can be done better in the next programme or operation. The community should be a key source of information in the evaluation, including levels of satisfaction with the programme and how it was delivered. The evaluation itself should be carried out in a participatory and transparent manner to make sure community views are captured and the results of evaluations are shared with the participating communities. Evaluation can be quantitative or qualitative and can performed at different stages and using different types like: formative, process, outcome, and impact. It is best to have the evaluation be carried out by an external person/group who is not involved in the planning and implementation to avoid biases and conflict of interest.

Formative and Process Evaluation

Evaluation during a program's implementation may examine whether the program is successfully recruiting and retaining its intended participants, using training materials that meet standards for accuracy and clarity, maintaining its projected timelines, coordinating efficiently with other ongoing programs and activities. Evaluation during program

implementation could be used to inform mid-course corrections to program implementation (formative evaluation) or to shed light on implementation processes (process evaluation).

Outcome, and Impact Evaluation

Following completion of the program, evaluation may examine its immediate outcomes or long-term impact including its efficiency and sustainability.

Components of evaluation:

Questions of evaluation should emphasize the following areas:

- **Relevancy:** especially for existing programs. Questions are: is there a need for the program? Is the program still needed? Those questions can help to redirect staff and budget from an existing program, if not relevant anymore, toward a new one.
- **Progress:** measured by answering the following questions that are parts of the process or formative evaluation: are program activities following the intended plan? Are appropriate staff and materials available in the right quantity at the right time? Are expected numbers of clients participating in the scheduled activities?
- **Cost efficiency:** evaluates the relationship between the benefits of a program and its cost. Following questions should be answered: what are the costs of the program? What are the benefits? Are the benefits worth the required cost? Could those results have been obtained less expensively?
- **Effectiveness (impact):** focuses on immediate and short-term results, answering the following questions: were program objectives met? Were the clients satisfied with the program?
- **Outcome:** evaluates whether program activities changed the initial reason for the program by answering the following: are goals met? What are the implications of the program? Are changes maintained for 6 weeks, 6 months or more?

ANNEX 1: FACILITATING PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT STEPS

FACILITATING PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT REGARDING A SPECIFIC ISSUE

- Select which development issue(s) will be assessed.
- Select community members who are most affected by the problem & technical specialists as appropriate to participate in assessment. Include participation of people from marginalized groups.
- Select assessment method (s) & prepare a list of issues to be addressed.
- Logistics
 - a. Time & place for assessment—inform participants
 - b. Collect materials for assessment exercise (see assessment protocols in tool box)
- Help community members conduct assessment using appropriate tools.
- Facilitate group discussion about findings—“what have we learned?” “What are our strengths & weaknesses?”
- Throughout the meetings, use group facilitation skills for balanced participation & rational discussion. Encourage participation from the marginalized by listening to their opinions, accommodating physical disability, & minimizing social stigma.
- Rapporteur: frontline worker or community member should record assessment results & discussion. He shares findings with other community groups, leadership & project managers through traditional communication and/or social media.

ANNEX 2: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS

This is a suggested list of questions to facilitate discussion about the headings in the action plan:

1. What is the problem?

A. What Are The Root Causes Of The Problem? (See Why? Why? Why? Exercise In Annex)

B. How Long Has This Problem Existed?

C. What Has Been Done In The Past? What Worked, What Didn't Work. D. What Community Members Are Most Affected By This Problem?

2. What Is The Activity?

A. What can we do about this problem now?

b. Who are possible partners—local leaders, local organizations, service providers such as teachers, health providers, wash technicians (mention in action plan & then fill in details in the partner matrix)

3. Who will do the activity?

a. Which community member(s) will take the lead? find partners, identify local resources, organize follow-up meetings, liaise with frontline worker

4. When

a. For each activity, agree on a realistic timeline for each step

5. Resource mobilization:

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