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| **Community Volunteer Selection Tool** |

**Definition:** the Community Volunteer Selection Tool outlines a process to identify community volunteers in collaboration with the community.

**Purpose of the Tool:** to collaborate with children and adults from the community to identify potential volunteers who can help facilitate links to case management for children at risk.

**When to use this Tool:** after deciding on the appropriate roles of community volunteers, the Selection Tool should be used. Even if your organization is already working with volunteers, this tool can be used to select future community volunteers, promoting greater community ownership and trust.

**Guidance**: if your organization is already working with volunteers, this tool can be developed collaboratively. If you’re just beginning to work with community volunteers, it is suggested to review with your team, as well as HR, and possibly inter-agency partners.

**Community Volunteer Selection Process**

**Introduction**

Community volunteers are an essential bridge between their community and the child protection system. As members of the case management team, their role is establishing and strengthening linkages between children at risk and in need of case management services.

**Step 1: Carefully consider your approach**

Responsible Community Engagement: If selection processes are not conducted with adequate community engagement, volunteers and children can be put at risk. Further, if safeguards and standards are not in place, people might be selected for reasons related to power structures and marginalized groups might be excluded.

Ensure diversity among community volunteers: this includes gender, age, ethnicity, people with disabilities, etc. In some contexts, it is also recommended to have a mix of displaced and host community volunteers.

Develop criteria for community volunteers according to the Volunteer Role Description: Review what was decided regarding the role of community volunteers. In order to be successful in the role, what are the essential skills expected and what prohibits a person from being recruited? (Add them to the list below.)

The people who are nominated for the community volunteer roles should meet the following criteria:

* Trusted people who are from the communities in which they will volunteer
* Have knowledge of their communities, including where to find resources and what the cultural norms and values are
* Well-connected and respected in their communities and good at developing trusting relationships
* Genuinely care about children, their neighbors and their communities
* Have good communication and interpersonal skills

Disqualifying criteria:

* Cannot be an adult married to a child
* Cannot be younger than 21 years old

**Step 2: Only proceed after establishing relationships and consulting with the community**

Building on the assessment taken in the first step, review who the key leaders and community groups are. Consider ways to identify people and groups who are trusted by children. Before identifying potential volunteers, spend time with community groups, traditional leaders, caregivers, and children. Ask them about issues that children are facing and where they go for help and support.

After listening to community members, explain what your organization is doing to help children in ways that they will understand. If they are interested, you can invite them to a meeting to identify potential volunteers who might want to work with the CP organization. In addition to speaking with community members, other ways to identify volunteers include posting advertisements and during community mobilization activities. Consider ways to target more marginalized community members in the advertisements and community selection meetings (such as members of minority groups, women, and youth to ensure a diverse group of volunteers.) Members of the host community might also be considered to promote social cohesion, if appropriate. Diverse means of engaging and identifying potential volunteers will promote greater community involvement and acceptance.

**Step 3: Identify potential volunteers**

Note that in some contexts it is common that the same community members are identified to be volunteers for many different projects and organizations. It is important to coordinate among organizations in order not to over-burden volunteers or cause competition among roles.

Meetings can be organized with community group members, parents and caregivers, and with children (groups should be limited to about 15 people). In some contexts, it might be appropriate to have separate groups for males and females. Meetings with children should be in similar age groups, and possibly separated by sex, if appropriate.

Community volunteer selection meeting process:

1. Introduce yourself, and your organization, and explain that you are looking for their help in identifying community volunteers. Describe what volunteers are expected to do in their roles to protect children in ways that they can understand.
2. Ask: Who are the people in the community who help children and caregivers?
3. Ask: What are some characteristics of people who help children in your community? (Use a piece of flip chart paper in the middle of the circle on the floor make a list of the characteristics that the community members share.)
4. Once you have written down all the things that tell us about how this person should be, look at the list and then say: “Do you know anyone who has these characteristics; someone who is like this? Tell me about her or him. Is there more than one person you know?”
5. Say: “The Child Protection project would like to teach people from the community about issues facing children so she (or he) can help children and caregivers. We would like **you** to choose Child Protection volunteers for your community. When you have named people we will ask if they are happy to be trained and to spend some of their time helping children and families who need help.

Ask the group to list the people that they recommend for the Child Protection volunteer role for their community and how you can find them. They should think about her or him in relation to the list of characteristics that are written on the list on the flip chart. You may find some of the group members volunteer themselves.

**Step 4: Invitation to community volunteers**

Arrange another meeting, or individual interviews with the potential community volunteers. When you have gathered, warmly welcome them and explain again who you are and a little about the organization. Explain that members of the community identified them as people who help children, who might be interested in being volunteers with the organization. Share with them the contents of the Volunteer Role Description, including the expected time commitment, training, supervision, and remuneration.

Remember that there are natural helpers who are already supporting children within the community who might not be interested in undertaking a formal role with a CP organization. These individuals should not be pressured, but rather encouraged to continue their efforts to support children. Further, there may be potential volunteers who are already support activities of another program or organization. Discuss with them the possible challenges of balancing multiple volunteering responsibilities, and be sure to clarify the expected workload.

Invite the potential community volunteers to ask questions about the role. Don’t feel you have to respond to all questions when you are not sure what the response should be. However, be sure to note the questions that you are unsure of, and promise to get back to them. Spend time having a discussion – do not rush this. They will want to talk about the idea. Listen to concerns and criticisms. Emphasize that it is okay, even at this stage, to say no if they feel they can’t do it.

**Step 5: Determine who will be selected as a community volunteer**

Returning to the original criteria and decide who are the best candidates according to the criteria and ensuring that the volunteer cadre is diverse. Consider making this decision with other members of the CP team, and perhaps community representatives.

If appropriate, ask for references (especially if the person has a relationship with another organization) and confirm that he/she can abide by the Code of Conduct. Some sample reference questions[[1]](#footnote-1) that are recommended include:

* How does the referee know the candidate?
* How long has s/he known the candidate?
* What are the candidate’s qualities and experience working with children?
* Are there any reasons why the candidate might not be suitable for a volunteer role working with children?
* If the candidate has an existing role with the organization, is it feasible that she/he can balance these responsibilities?

**Step 6: Commitment meeting with volunteers and community members**

After deciding who the community volunteers will be, it is recommended to have a formal meeting with the community leader, the CP Organization, the volunteers, and the broader community.

You can ask the community leader to present the volunteers and to remind everyone of their roles to help children and families in the community.

Ask the volunteers who have been selected by the community to stand up. Then explain how they were selected.

Explain that the community must feel they have a **social contract** with this person. A **contract** needs both sides to agree – in this case children and caregivers must trust the volunteers they have selected. While the volunteers must feel that the community (including the leaders) support her and will assist her in helping families.

**Step 7: Signing the Community Volunteer Description and the Code of Conduct**

Be sure that the Volunteer Role Description and Code of Conduct (both additional tools) are in the local language so the volunteers can read what they are signing. If they cannot read, review it closely with them. All volunteers should have their own copy of the Role Description and Code of Conduct.

1. UNHCR MENA Regional Tools, Community Support Volunteers for UASC [↑](#footnote-ref-1)