

# Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement: DRAFT

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is a critical component of international development practice and humanitarian assistance. Around the world and across contexts, community engagement works with communities by supporting them to take their own action to address their most pressing issues. Community engagement is intrinsic to human-rights based approaches to development, the core framework under which UNICEF and its UN and interagency partners operate.

The Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement has been developed through a consultative process supported by UNICEF's Communication for Development as a tool for development and humanitarian actors and the governments they support. It describes core minimum standards developed in line with the principles of human-rights and community-based approaches, and it seeks the meaningful integration of community engagement standards and activities in all aspects of community engagement practice; including project cycles, methodologies, participatory approaches, integration, coordination and operations. The focus of the standards is on the implementation of essential minimum standards that create an enabling environment for communities to be listened to, and in turn to engage in the processes and with the issues that affect them, while recommending comprehensive actions for contexts that might require more intensive community engagement.

In undertaking this work, UNICEF aims to establish global public goods and platforms that will support implementation of high quality and evidence-based community engagement at country level.

The Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement is intended for leaders and practitioners from institutions and that design, implement and fund development and humanitarian response that incorporates community engagement approaches. This includes governments, non-government organizations, multi- and bi-laterals and donors.

Importantly, these standards do not presuppose that community engagement requires external interventions, nor that specific or prescribed community engagement approaches are always optimal in all aspects of development and humanitarian practice. Instead, these standards set forth a baseline set of principles to inform community engagement strategy, policy, and practice across contexts; as is appropriate within the context of governments' development strategies, or in humanitarian or emergency contexts. Drawing from a review of existing standards, approaches and practices, the process for developing these standards and indicators is based on an international multi-country, multi-stakeholder consultation process designed to ensure advice and support from all actors.

## 1.1 Purpose of Standards

A growing consensus around rethinking community engagement comes from a broader recognition and acceptance of the social determinants of development, and the importance of community-level action in the context of international developmental and humanitarian response. The Grand Bargain, launched at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, launched the 'Participation Revolution' that committed signatories to *'develop common standards and a coordinated approach for community engagement and participation'*.<sup>1</sup> This call for a more coordinated approach is in recognition of the fact that communities may not differentiate between humanitarian organizations and diverse institutional approaches, which in turn prompts a need for *'improved response-wide accountability, [and] resulting in humanitarian partners recognizing that a common service (or collective) approach to community engagement can be more effective than traditional agency or specific sector approaches'*.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness identified five principles: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability that each support the prioritization of community engagement, and the establishment of minimum standards.<sup>2</sup> These principles highlight the need for improved practice, coordination, integration and measurement of community engagement within emergency contexts and in

longer-term development contexts. They are essential components of community systems strengthening, with multifaceted implications for aid effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability across all domains.

The development of standards is intended to address several design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation issues, including:

- **Quality.** ‘Community engagement’ is an approach that is utilized for a range of objectives, both in terms of process (achieving participation in and acceptance of a particular response, changing particular behaviors and norms, encouraging ‘buy-in’ or ‘ownership’, or for empowering communities to take their own action) and outcomes (e.g. health, nutrition, immunization, water and sanitation). While sharing a common description, these varied objectives can result in a wide variety of approaches and interpretations of what constitutes quality ‘community engagement’. This framework aims to determine and define what are the fundamental elements of all approaches that can be understood as representing ‘quality’ design and implementation and further define the field of community engagement, resulting in increasingly better practice by partners and donors.
- **Accountability.** The lack of clarity and consensus on what constitutes quality community engagement make it difficult to measure community engagement and the extent to which communities are involved in decision-making, managing activities, monitoring and evaluating results. It also creates challenges in advocating for its prioritization and makes it difficult for policy makers, funding agencies and humanitarian actors to determine how to allocate resources and integrate community engagement into development initiatives and humanitarian response. Being able to demonstrate to communities, policy-makers and decision-makers at all levels of the value of community engagement through consistent and rigorous measurement of minimum standards is a key goal of this document.
- **Harmonization.** Implementing organizations have their own mandates, missions, methodologies and objectives when working with communities to undertake development or humanitarian response programming. To this end, institutional standards for community engagement and participatory approaches exist in abundance. However, these approaches are not necessarily always complimentary, nor well integrated or coordinated within a given context. Standards provide the opportunity to harmonize these approaches across organizations and contexts.

## 1.2 What is community engagement?

While it is generally understood there are some key elements or principles underpinning community engagement practice in any given context, there are a diversity of approaches, methodologies, processes and structures used to undertake community engagement. Broadly however, the role of community engagement is to improve the equality, efficacy and impact of responses and services through ensuring:

- Communities - especially those at the greatest risk - are active stakeholders, based on transparent and open information flows, in the deliberations, consultations, decision-making, design, implementation and measurement of initiatives and systems that affect them; taking ownership and action on the issues facing them, and ensuring that communities have mechanisms to provide feedback as to the conduct and effectiveness of services.
- Communities are empowered when they take ownership and action on the issues facing them;
- Ensuring that communities have mechanisms to provide continuous feedback as to the conduct and effectiveness of services, and that this feedback is listened and responded to;
- Ensuring that programs, projects, and policies are aligned to the needs and priorities of national and sub-national governments and the local populations;

- Improving the quality of research, evaluation and monitoring of communities and the issues that impact them.

Community engagement can be utilized as a **primary approach** that is specifically focused – in terms of goals, activities and budgets - on mobilizing communities, where the issues to be addressed are identified by communities. It is also an **instrumental or integrated approach**, whereby engagement or apply mobilization methodologies are incorporated to accomplish other program objectives (for example specific health outcomes) in a participatory and empowering manner.

Community engagement is also a technical area of expertise, consisting of combination of methodological and operational approaches that are complex and can require significant resources to scale. It can also be a distinct process that can be controlled and adjusted in according to community feedback and the evolving protocols of a response, and should be consistently and rigorously measured.

Community engagement is also a means of ensuring the accountability of development and humanitarian actors by facilitating and structuring ongoing communication on the appropriateness and effectiveness of initiatives and engaging communities directly in the planning, design and measurement of activities.

### 1.3 Core Principles for Community Engagement

The core principles underpinning the Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement are drawn from and align to international frameworks guiding development and humanitarian assistance.

**Table 2: Core Principles and Alignment to International Standards**

Principle	Description	Aligned With
Human Rights-based approach	<p>A conceptual framework that integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the policies, programs and processes of development and humanitarian actors. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Empowering rights-holders to claim their rights and enabling duty-bearers to meet their obligations.</li> <li>▪ Claim and entitlement</li> <li>▪ Clear obligations</li> <li>▪ Active participation/partners</li> <li>▪ Equal rights for all</li> <li>▪ Mandatory, legal obligation</li> <li>▪ Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UNICEF Human Rights Based Approach to Programming</li> <li>▪ The Convention on the Rights of the Child</li> <li>▪ UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy.</li> <li>▪ The Agenda for Protection (Goal 3, Objective 4)</li> </ul>
Community-based Approach	<p>A community-based approach reinforces dignity and self-esteem of people of concern and empowers all actors. Communities work to prevent social problems and to deal directly with those that do arise, instead of having external actors step in and assume these responsibilities. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collective community decision-making</li> <li>▪ Action by all</li> <li>▪ Builds on traditional social practices of community cooperation</li> <li>▪ Creates new local examples that can be shared with other communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations.</li> <li>▪ World Bank Community Approach to Development</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Builds on social networks to spread support, commitment, and changes in social norms and behaviors.</li> <li>▪ Values the right of people to self-determination and recognizes their resilience.</li> <li>▪ Increases participatory decision-making processes by bringing diverse stakeholders into a common process.</li> </ul>	
Quality and Accountability	<p>Community engagement is fundamental to improving development and humanitarian assistance by ensuring quality by providing value to communities that are being served and accountability by involving communities in decision-making, managing activities and measuring results. This results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved program design and implementation resulting in efficiencies and more cost-effective way to achieve sustainable results.</li> <li>▪ Reduced operational risks by ensuring the relevance and responsiveness of programming.</li> <li>▪ More accurate monitoring and measurement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sphere</li> <li>▪ Grand Bargain</li> <li>▪ CDAC Accountability, Inclusion, Transparency, and Participation</li> <li>▪ ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Standard.</li> <li>▪ Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines</li> <li>▪ The Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance</li> <li>▪ The HAP Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standards.</li> <li>▪ UNHCR AAP</li> <li>▪ Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs</li> </ul>

#### 1.4 Operational definitions

##### **This framework defines community as:**

The minimum social unit that is locally relevant just above the level of the household (eg. neighborhood, canton, precinct, parish, town, village). It can also include non-geographically centered social networks of interaction, interchange, and inter-dependency. Such networks may have direct local inputs into the transfer of health, educational, social, informational, economic, cultural, and political resources (e.g. diaspora networks, rural-urban networks, peer-group or social networks, kinship networks).

##### **Community engagement is defined as:**

A foundational action for working with a wide range of traditional, community (including vulnerable groups), civil society, opinion leaders; and expanding collective or group participation to address the issues that affect their lives. Community engagement empowers social groups and social networks and improves the responsiveness of development and humanitarian actors. By combining these principles and strategies, all stakeholders gain access to processes for assessing, analyzing, planning, leading, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating actions, programs, and policies that will promote the survival, development, protection and participation of children and women.

#### 1.5 How Standards Should Be Used

Community engagement, in all its forms, is a participatory process. Flexibility and adaptability is an important

consideration when applying the minimum quality standards. Context, including political, socio-cultural conditions, project timeframes, or effort/resource capacities can determine the degree to which standards can be applied and the extent to which they will need to be adapted. However, users are encouraged to use these standards as a guide to achieving quality and accountability, and to consider the highest degree to which these can be achieved in any given context and taking the following into consideration:

- Community engagement is designed to be context specific, localized, responsive, and bidirectional.
- Prescriptive protocols for community engagement risk encouraging top-down approaches that, by definition, do not adequately involve community participation.
- Most types of programs or initiatives impact-and can change-the routine functioning of local systems. This is neither a strength or a weakness of the approach; but it does recognize that there is no “pure” state of community action or participation, and that communities are adapted to operate in dynamic, responsive, and often changeable environments.
- Community engagement is a cross-cutting approach that helps to establish an ‘infrastructure’ of participation and communication across social, political and cultural contexts.
- Despite its cross-cutting attributes, community engagement requires systemization, resources, and sound policies to ensure quality and accountability.

## 1.6 Community Engagement Indicators

The development of standard indicators for measuring community engagement is a critical function of this framework. Indicators that are aligned to minimum standards are needed in order to ensure project harmonization, results-based management of community engagement activities; and accountability to local populations, governments, and donors. Indicators are needed to improve the quality of community engagement, support communities and providers in achieving community goals, and provide stakeholders with measurable benchmarks of process and outcomes in order to enable intra-program accountability and cross-program comparisons.

Three tools have been developed to support aggregate measures of community engagement indicators so that indicators can be analyzed, evaluated, and modeled in conjunction with other program outputs, external measures (e.g. SDGs), and program goals. Annex 2 provides an overview of the considerations for indicator development informing these tools and indicators. These are:

- *The Community Engagement Score:* In this approach, the objective is to develop a relative scale of community engagement results. A pool of indicators for each minimum standard will be established in a common database, and may be disaggregated by scale, process/output, or other considerations. Best-fit indicators can be selected by communities and programs as measures. Guidance would be provided to support quantitative measurement and qualitative evaluation of continuously collected data in order to establish a community engagement “score.” Ongoing evaluation will lead to the establishment of optimal, sub-optimal, and supra-optimal scores across programs, regions, and target outcomes.
- *The Community Engagement Power Index:* In this approach, the objective is to align organizational and community actions around community engagement with community engagement minimum standards, in order to build an evidence base that allows for the development of an evidence base about the relationship between intensity of community engagement actions and community engagement outcomes. To build the Power Index, minimum, intermediate, and maximum program inputs will be accorded a numeric scale (e.g. 1-3) for each of the minimum standards (defined in Section 9: Part A).

These scales can be aggregated and disaggregated as needed, but will provide an index that enables “sensitivity” to variations in community engagement inputs.

- *The Community Engagement Process Index:* In this approach, the objective is to focus on the process of community engagement, rather than outcomes. This approach recognizes that community engagement is a critical part of program management and program effectiveness in using community engagement to strengthen community systems. Specifically, this community engagement processes minimum standards supporting Standard B: Implementation, Standard C: Coordination and Integration, and Standard D: Operations. This approach would be developed to support organizations in reflecting in an ongoing way on how community engagement is being integrated into other factors that are necessary to achieve program efficiency, effectiveness, community representation and empowerment, and durable community systems strengthening contributions.

## 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Minimum Quality Standards are organized into four sections and cover core minimum standards, implementation, coordination, integration and operations. These are considered important functions for community engagement as they encapsulate the roles and functions of a wide range of stakeholders – including communities, practitioner organizations and policy-makers – and reflect the broader contextual, technical and organizational capacities and considerations required.

Table 2 provides a summary of the Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement. These include:

- PART A: Core Minimum Standards. These describe the foundational or fundamental standards that should guide community engagement practice. These are critical for achieving quality and accountability and should be achieved or considered irrespective of goals, objectives, approaches or contexts.
- PART B: Minimum Standards for Implementation. These standards, aligned to elements of the project cycle, describe standards of practice designed to engage communities and facilitate achievement of the common minimum standards. These standards explicitly target practice and cover elements of design, planning, management of activities and monitoring and evaluation.
- PART C: Minimum Standards for Coordination and Integration. These standards focus on supporting collective, harmonized and mutually supportive community engagement practice at national and local levels. Coordination refers to how partners implementing community engagement activities coordinate their activities with other implementation partners, particularly government, response clusters/pillars and communities. Coordination supports alignment to development and humanitarian strategy, policy and protocols and avoids geographic duplication.
- Part D: Minimum Standards for Operations. Standards supporting operations focus on key management and administrative considerations that support effective community engagement. Resourcing of community engagement is human capital intensive and can require operational imperatives - such as human resources, logistics, coordination and safety/security – that involve significant budgetary consideration and can be under-resourced in comparison to other technical areas.

**Table 3: Summary of Minimum Standards for Community Engagement.**

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Part A: Common Minimum Standards

1. Participation
2. Empowerment and Ownership
3. Inclusion
4. Communication
5. Adaptability and Localization
6. Building on Local Capacity

Part B: Standards supporting implementation.

7. Informed Design
8. Participatory Planning and Preparation
9. Managing Activities
10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Part C: Standards supporting coordination and Integration

11. Partner Coordination
12. Integration of Community Engagement

Part D: Standards supporting operations.

13. Human Resources and Organizational Structures
14. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting

The Community Engagement Standards and Indicators are organized to present the following components:

- *Description of the Standard:* This describes a minimum standard for achieving quality, accountable community engagement.
- *Actions:* These are the activities intended to provide guidance on achievement of the standards. They provide definitional actions

**PART A: FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.**

These fundamental minimum standards should be reflected at all levels of implementation and across all contexts. They reflect additional core principles of community engagement but are tied explicitly to a set of actions that inform each standard.



The intention of presenting a spectrum of actions is to enable those responsible for designing and implementing initiatives to more clearly identify, plan for and communicate what type of community engagement is intended, and thereby providing greater accountability and transparency to all stakeholders, including communities and funders. It also aims to provide some level of flexibility to the standards in terms of the variety of contexts within which community engagement is being undertaken.

<p><b>1. PARTICIPATION</b></p> <p>DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD</p> <p>Participation is a right and is essential for informed decision-making. Participatory methods should be used to promote the inclusion of communities and all identified or targeted sub-groups, including marginalized groups (for example gender, ethnicity, caste, ability), in defining their needs and determining the ways of meeting those needs. The principle of <i>participation</i> also presupposes that voluntarism is a primary means for achieving mobilization. For implementing organizations, to support the ability to listen to communities, seek to understand the local context, to be creative in changing approaches, to be flexible towards pre-existing models and templates and provides for the acceptance of alternative views and demands requiring a re-focusing the community engagement process.</p>
<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The expected outcomes and related impacts of community engagement are aligned with project design and methodologies.</li> <li>▪ Have clear objectives for levels of participation based on necessary minimums for achieving outcomes and impacts.</li> <li>▪ are consulted and have a level of involvement in the design of the initiative.</li> <li>▪ Transparency to communities in regards to the proposed level of participation in a contextually appropriate manner and in line with planning activities.</li> <li>▪ Balance the imperative for ‘quick results’ with the need for participatory processes.</li> <li>▪ Vulnerable groups are actively identified, and mechanisms are in place to ensure their participation.</li> <li>▪ Processes are in place to involve communities in key elements of design and management of activities.</li> <li>▪ Ensure participation and representation of communities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in development and humanitarian initiatives.</li> <li>▪ Responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.</li> <li>▪ Processes are in place for collaboration, shared learning, interactive participation throughout the engagement process.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2. EMPOWERMENT AND OWNERSHIP</b></p> <p>DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD</p> <p>Community empowerment and ownership, advocates for, trains in skills necessary for, and supports communities in leadership and decision-making over all decisions and actions affecting the community. Empowerment and ownership extends beyond participation to how much control of decisions and processes that impact their lives are in the hands of communities. It also refers to power within communities and how changes in power are catalyzed and supported. Empowered communities with ownership have a sense of commitment and active participation among community members and a belief in collective self-efficacy. It includes:</p>
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- Communities are able to take responsibility for the continuation of the work and manage the activities and services that they consider priorities.
- Building resilience and the ability to withstand threats or shocks, or to adapt to new livelihood options, in ways that preserve integrity and that do not deepen vulnerability
- Ensuring that with the right information, people can make informed decisions, find answers to their problems and connect with others to organize their own response.
- Leadership of a diverse and representative group of community members.
- Empowerment is both a process and outcome of community engagement.
- The redistribution of authority structures towards greater representation and decision-making.

#### ACTIONS

- Community members are involved in the planning processes and supporting in decision-making around managing and monitoring activities, reflecting local priorities and needs.
- Communities have been provided with opportunity to identify and contribute resources and skills to planned activities, based on demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the planned activities.
- Determine roles and responsibilities regarding funding and consider requiring some kind of match from communities, even in-kind contributions such as volunteer time, local assets.
- Communities and community leaders have a direct role in decision making in all activities, including priorities and allocation of resources.
- Leadership is identified and fostered from amongst those previously without a voice in decision-making.
- Involve community members in the creation of new knowledge, including research and monitoring and evaluation.
- Community leaders have been able to apply for and receive funding for ongoing activities.

### 3. INCLUSION

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Participatory methods are used to promote the inclusion of communities and all sub-groups, including marginalized groups, in defining their needs and determining the ways of meeting those needs. It includes:

- The inclusion of vulnerable groups such as poor households, persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, ethnic and linguistic minorities, religious minorities, LGBTI community members are actively identified and mechanisms are in place to ensure their participation.
- The inclusion of minority or under-represented issues and perceptions.
- The presence or efforts to establish a balanced representation of people in any target population.

#### ACTIONS

- TBC

### 4. COMMUNICATION

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Communication requires the provision of clear information to engaged communities in regard to their entitlements, expectations and obligations, in the correct format and language and through appropriate channels. It also involves active listening and response that promotes accurate, bidirectional information flows that build trust and positive feedback loops between communities and other stakeholders on all issues related to the engagement. Clear and culturally appropriate information helps communities to identify achievable actions and solutions to the problems they encounter.

It involves using a range of communication tools – including interpersonal communication and digital platforms – to engage communities with two-way communication.

Communication should encompass both what is going wrong with the engagement *and* on what is working. This includes what ideas communities have for improvements and project adjustments, knowledge, attitudes and practices to key issues. It is important that 'feedback loops' are not equated only with complaints mechanisms, or are highly dependent on proactive community members to highlight project and institutional performance.

- Communities receive clear information about project intentions, methods and objectives and help organizations and facilitators to understand the local information ecosystem and community structures.
- Clear and functional lines of communication should be in place, which are understood and agreed to by all stakeholders.
- Establish mechanisms for ensuring bidirectional communication and feedback between communities and powerholders, including government and implementing organizations.
- Feedback loops are sustained and not restricted to single meetings or assessments.
- Feedback mechanisms are structured to facilitate comprehensive information flow that includes both information on what is working in the project, what ideas communities have for improvements and project adjustments, current knowledge, attitudes and practices and reporting of rumors.
- Utilize technology and digital platforms for facilitating information flow.
- Systematic and transparent mechanisms through which people can register dissent, raise conflicts, provide regular feedback and influence programs.

#### 5. ADAPTABILITY AND LOCALIZATION

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement requires an awareness of the local context; and the ability to be flexible and responsive to local populations' needs, local conditions, and local concerns. Community engagement strategies that may work in one community or country—like the use of focal points, community leader strategies, or multi-stakeholder inclusive community meetings - may not work in other contexts, where national and regional political, cultural, or historical considerations impact community agreement with or responsiveness to such strategies.

Community engagement strategies have sectoral specificity (e.g. health, WASH, child protection, or emergencies), different possibilities for engagement based on emergency or development contexts, and distinct timeframes for feasibility. Adaptable and localized community engagement approaches ensure that community engagement processes are able to adapt to new circumstances, deal with sudden or anticipated changes, and respond to uncertainty. It can include:

- The ability to understand the local context.
- Grounded real-time research and reporting capacities to inform of support in the community, and to provide information and insight regarding conflict, dissent, or disengagement in the local context
- Research and awareness of historical, economic, political, and ethical factors
- The ability to be creative in changing approaches
- Attention to the demands that project goals, strategies, and tactics impose upon communities
- Deliberate review of pre-existing models and templates with the intent of aligning models and templates to national strategies and regional capacities Innovation of novel models and templates with the intent of aligning models and templates to local needs and concerns
- Awareness and use of local capabilities, innovations, priorities, and insights
- The ability to re-focusing the community engagement process.

#### ACTIONS

- Consultation with key stakeholders (for example community representatives, local associations, local health, water authorities, national staff) to learn about the needs and priorities of communities using population-based research approaches (e.g. KAPs and FGDs).
- Working with local and regional government to ensure alignment of community engagement actions with national and regional strategies.
- Capitalize on existing information (for example previous program or project material) or other readily available resources for ensuring a rapid, minimum review.
- Bilateral communication with community leaders to understand local conditions, local needs, and local capacities in the community.
- Placement of community liaison in communities to provide information to communities about project, and share community concerns.
- Working with anthropologists and local community engagement workers to identify critical issues in advance of engagement.

### 6. BUILDING ON LOCAL CAPACITIES

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community capacity building is focused on providing the essential tools and knowledge for communities and frontline workers to fully participate in community engagement activities. It is based on the premise that the goal of any effort should not only be strong programs but strong communities that are capable of self-sufficiency, independence, and sustainable development. Community engagement is stronger when it builds on existing skills and resources, and provides support for developing new skills, for all community stakeholders. In the context of community engagement, it includes:

- The identification and prioritization of local resources, expertise, and knowledge.
- The mobilization of resources inside and outside the community.
- Ability to translate commitment into action to solve problems, including the ability to interpret and use information and data for critical reflection, action planning, managing activities, addressing conflict and evaluating efforts.
- Utilization of existing capacities, including pre-existing community groups and social networks.
- Training and resource transfers, including and education, knowledge, skills, and materials resource transfers.

#### ACTIONS

- Ensure that community stakeholders and local implementing organizations receiving the support and skills required to undertake the planned activities.
- Ensure that all skills and tools required for the project are based on, or incorporate, local knowledge. .
- Conduct capacity assessments of communities, community entities and partners to ensure actors have the capacity to implement and monitoring initiatives.
- Training and capacity building measures are available to community members and aligned to the needs and gaps identified.
- Mainstream community engagement within training for health care and other frontline workers.
- Build the capacity of national and state level authorities to undertake community engagement activities.
- Identify skills gaps and designing refresher training, supervision, mentoring and coaching is provided to frontline workers.
- Build in at least three to five years to better support community capacity strengthening that will enable communities to sustain results and continue to improve their health.

## PART B: STANDARDS SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

The standards in Section B are broadly aligned to the project cycle and standards focus on project design, planning, assessment, working with communities and monitoring and evaluation.

### 7. INFORMED DESIGN

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Informed design and project planning ensures that community engagement initiatives are contextually appropriate and based on a thorough understanding of participating communities, involve the participation and inclusion of all relevant partners and stakeholders, are undertaken within a suitable timeframe with adequate budgeting and include strategies, methodologies and approaches that are best suited to achieving objectives and in line with core principles of community engagement.

#### ACTIONS

- Thorough **contextual analysis** should inform the design of community engagement initiative. This includes ensure that relevant cultural, political, social, economic and geographic factors are taken into consideration.
- Community engagement initiatives align with, or are informing, existing **national frameworks, policies, and processes** (for example, national health strategies).
- Ensure that community engagement initiatives are **informed by, and build on, the work of government and other partners**, to ensure relevance and avoid duplication.
- The project is in line with relevant institutional, national or international **standards of ethics**.
- Undertake project design that includes **proposal and corresponding budgets that fully understand and value the costs associated with effective community engagement**. Take into consideration that flexibility is essential to be responsive to community priorities and regular new information.
- **Advocate with governments, donors and head offices for prioritizing community engagement planning and resources during project design**, especially in programs in which community engagement is seen as secondary to the direct provision of services or other inputs.
- **Anticipate how flexibility needs to be built into the project structure** to accommodate community engagement dynamics and community inputs that can only be decided once communities are engaged.
- Provide adequate time and resources (such as skillsets, budget and capacity building/training) within the project period **to collect and analyze high-quality qualitative data**.
- Undertake a **comprehensive partner mapping exercise** that takes into consideration all those that may be impacted by activities and how they will be engaged, including government departments and agencies, at national, regional and local levels, local civil society organizations and NGOs and international NGO partners.
- **Consider transition and exit strategies** that take into consideration what is realistic and practical in terms of the continuation of activities, maintenance of skills or capacities and anticipated outcomes, while insuring a minimum of negative disruption to communities.

### 8. PARTICIPATORY PREPARATION AND ASSESSMENT

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Activities during preparation focus on guidance for initial interaction and communication with communities. The objective is to ensure consultations provide communities and with information about project intentions, methods and objectives and help organizations and facilitators to understand the local information ecosystem and community structures.

Initial engagement with communities is the point where initial trust is established between key actors; and patterns are established that guide the relationship during future activities. It involves identifying key community groups, individual and leaders (and potential leaders), noting emerging issues, and determining appropriate mechanisms for resolving issues. Participatory assessments of communities are a fundamental standard that underpins community engagement initiatives. Participatory assessments identify community needs, capacities, resources, support structures, communication channels, practices and behaviors and stakeholders.

## ACTIONS

- Recognize that both **formal and informal structures and social networks are present and active in communities at local level** and ensure these are integrated or engaged within development initiatives.
- In the early stages of preparation and assessment, **ensure the identification and inclusion of vulnerable groups in any assessment or mapping activities**, including women and girls, poor households, persons with disabilities, the elderly and children, ethnic and linguistic minorities, religious minorities, or LGBTI community members. This should take into consideration any issues and risks related to stigmatization that might potentially occur during the mapping process.
- Establish a **conducive environment in which relevant stakeholders in partner communities are listened to and informed**, in a culturally appropriate manner, about those aspects of the intended engagement that is relevant to a particular stakeholder group.
- Ensure **high standards of information sharing** related to project design, the objectives, levels of commitment and sustainability/exit strategies. This should include the management of mutual expectations and accountabilities.
- Establish a **clear and transparent mechanism for selecting community leaders, mobilizers, representatives and community entities** (such as groups).
- **Seek and receive formal approval and acceptance from communities**, in preparation for any interaction with communities and all other partners detailed.
- **'Meet communities where they are.'** Utilize appropriate meeting spaces, take into consideration livelihoods, timing of local holidays and cultural activities, use appropriate language, concepts and ideas to explain
- **Employ recognized participatory approaches** such as Participatory Learning Action (PLA); Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA); Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA); Participatory Research and Assessment (PRA); PAR Participatory Action Research (PAR); PPA Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA); Health Impact Assessment (HIA); Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA).
- **Identify local-level community actions and responses to issues** and ensure these are prioritized for support.
- **Share and discuss the results of any participatory assessments with communities** in ways that are

accessible and appropriate.

## 9. IMPLEMENTATION

### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Working with communities to include elements of structuring engagement, action planning and implementation of primary activities. This includes identifying or activating the individuals, groups and structures identified or co-developed during participatory preparation and assessment. The establishment or identification of clear organizational structures are important as they describe how communication flows, how data and information moves and how some decisions might be made or approved.

Planning involves community participatory approaches focused on reaching agreement on activities, resources required, roles and responsibilities and a timeline for implementation. Action plans are facilitated community decisions about how progress with move towards their goals. Community planning involves participatory identification of the issues to be addressed, and setting priorities for action. With organizations, it involves developing a common understanding of the core problems and issues, documenting these core issues, and setting priorities and developing community action plans that align with core issues

### ACTIONS

- Clearly **identify individuals, groups and leaders that will facilitate, lead, engage and monitor community engagement initiatives** over the course of their cycle.
- Develop and support the capacity of local community entities to undertake their roles. Have **clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, including the development of policies and procedures**.
- Advocate with community leaders or influence for the **inclusion of vulnerable or underrepresented community members for leadership roles**.
- Ensure **community mobilizers or their equivalent act as frontline workers** in the engagement process and that communities are leading the selection of mobilizers.
- **Mobilizers are comprehensively trained and receive ongoing support and guidance** and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- **Incentives, both financial and non-financial, are contextually appropriate**, in line with government policy, and clearly communicated to all community members.
- Ensuring consideration of **representatives from key partner and stakeholder groups** (social and youth clubs, cooperatives, business, schools, private sector, religious, ethnic, disability and political groups), gender representation, individuals with technical expertise.
- Planning is undertaken as a participatory process at community level and is focused on **reaching agreement on activities, a common understanding of the core problems and issues, resources required, roles and responsibilities and a timeline for implementation**.
- **Action plans are developed by communities** establishing priority activities and how these are to be implemented and measured.
- Priorities established by communities should be considered alongside those planned for the project and facilitated where possible, even if not strictly line with planned priorities project or those of donors, government or other stakeholders.
- Mechanisms are in place for seeking **compromise where priorities are not aligned**.

## 10. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING



## DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement initiatives are well served by a comprehensive but practical data collection plan involving all key stakeholders with clear processes for data collection, analysis and distribution involving communities, mobilizers, staff and any other relevant stakeholders. This involves ensuring that monitoring systems are in place for communities to monitor both their own action plans and monitor the work of implementing agencies and other institution and stakeholders participating in the project.

These systems improve the quality and effectiveness of programming, build the capacity of local teams, and address system and process failures and abuses. Routine monitoring should be in place to facilitate making adjustments in real time and provide results and updates to communities. Communities have a role in designing monitoring frameworks, identifying indicators and undertaking data collection and analysis.

Community engagement evaluations, like evaluations across all sectors, should be in place to determine the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of initiatives. Participatory evaluations ensure that communities are involved in the design of the process, along with data collection, analysis and validation. Evaluations build on baseline data collected during the preparatory and design stages of the project and should utilize the same principles of participation, ownership and empowerment.

## ACTIONS

- **Establish clear structures and mechanisms for feedback loops** mechanisms and that listening to communities results in appropriate changes to activities.
- Prioritize the development of **real time mechanisms for community monitoring** of engagement initiatives.
- Develop **indicators and means of verification in conjunction with local staff and communities**, facilitating familiarity with log frames (or their contents) in an accessible way.
- Developing **simple tools that are accessible and usable by all stakeholders**.
- Ensure that **adequate training, supervision and capacity building** is provided to those maintaining monitoring systems.
- Ensure communities have the support to **identify and define the data they need or want to collect** and how this is to be achieved.
- Ensure communities have the **capacity to collect and analyze monitoring information** and use the information to inform decision-making and self-management.
- Monitoring of the monitoring systems being used to ensure they are fit for purpose, while ensuring **that quality data are informing changes and adjustments** to both program activities and monitoring.
- Engage communities and stakeholders in the **development and implementation of an evaluation plans**.
- **High levels of data stewardship is maintained**, including policies and guidelines related to how communities and institutions managed and store data, and that issues or private and personal data are addressed.
- **Disseminate and share the findings of evaluations** within organizations, with government, donors and other partners and stakeholders. With communities, the results and implications of evaluations should be shared and discussed.

## PART C: STANDARDS SUPPORTING COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION.

### 11. COORDINATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Partners utilizing community engagement approaches should coordinate their activities with government, other response partners and coordination structures. Government should develop policy and advances mechanisms for coordinating community engagement activities. In the absence of government policy or strategy specifically guiding engagement with communities,

#### ACTIONS

- **Harmonization of community engagement standards** and shared means of developing robust indicators and means of verification.
- Governments and their partners **map and share areas of activity** to avoid duplication of programming and geographic location.
- Mechanisms and inter-agency **policies are in place for sharing with government and between community engagement partners** that collect and store data.
- Governments and partners **share community-level data and evaluations**.
- Government and partners **develop and share technical capacity**.
- Within government, there a **unit or section** dedicated to health education and promotion, social mobilization or behavior change communication **that includes or has capacity to coordinate and support community engagement initiatives**.
- Promote the use of **nationally and internationally mandated tools and guidelines** for implementing community engagement.
- Development of **standard operating practices or community engagement norms** and standards at national level. At a national level, there is operational guidance on the roles of community engagement to implementing partners. For example, through the development of SOPs.
- Develop an **inter-agency advocacy strategy** at for ensuring the prioritization of community engagement.
- During emergencies, ensuring **community engagement is represented in all pillar cluster meetings** and that all implementing agencies are attending.
- **Advocate for the importance of community engagement at all stages of the project cycle** in both humanitarian and development initiatives.

## 12. INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement should be integrated and harmonized within the development and humanitarian architecture at national, regional and global levels. At programmatic level, community engagement should be mainstreamed into all sectors to ensure participation and to improve effectiveness.

### ACTIONS

- **Work with and through local governments** to ensure community engagement activities are integrated with, and aligned to, local strategies and policies. Support feedback loops that go from communities, through local government, to national level policy-making and back to communities.
- Make every effort to **integrate community engagement into broader national strategies** (i.e. health or WASH) to complement and work with other components such as service strengthening, policy, training, communication, and logistics.
- **Work closely with government and relevant ministries through the project cycle**, including consideration of whether the community engagement initiatives are aligned to and
- Include **clear guidelines for describing how community engagement and communities are integrated** into project organizational structures, multi-level integration (national, subnational, community), meaningful data collection and analysis processes, and feedback mechanisms.
- Ensuring **national community engagement frameworks are in place for community engagement across all ministries**. Prioritize the placement of community engagement in broader national strategies (such as health and emergency preparedness) and include clear guidelines for how community engagement can be integrated within all action.
- Integration at national level during emergencies to **ensure community engagement is aligned with health and humanitarian protocols** and mainstreamed to ensure service provision is appropriate and effective.
- Ensure that **community engagement is integrated with, and reinforced by, a range of approaches** that includes mass media, targeted risk communication, interpersonal communication and advocacy.

## PART D: STANDARDS SUPPORTING OPERATIONS.

Operations refers to those management and administrative foundations that support community engagement. Alignment of operational activities - such as human resources, logistics, procurement and safety/security – with methodological approaches is imperative for achieving scale and structure.

### 13. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement is a personnel intensive approach that requires a high level of technical expertise in the social sciences, gender, anthropology, project cycle management etc. This need to for trained and qualified staff, volunteers and mobilizers should be a minimum standard in all circumstances.

#### ACTIONS

- Ensure **adequate human resources** are allocated for the activities planned.
- **Recruit quality staff with the requisite participatory, communication and organizational skills** to support implementation and act as intermediaries with communities are clearly identified and known to all parties. Staff turnover is limited. This ensures that there is continued trust and connections with community members.
- Community engagement **experts are responsible for designing and managing initiatives**, or that **technical teams have dedicated resources** to design and manage community-centered activities in their specific sectors.
- Ensuring that there are **dedicated community experts to act as focal points for other programmatic areas** and are deployed to liaise with external partners and stakeholders on issues of community engagement.
- **Staff and mobilizers are part of an accountable management structure** that enables clear lines of delegation and communication and ensures all parties are part of the decision-making process.
- Ensure a **gender balance** is maintained in teams.
- Ensure **capacity building in community engagement is institutionalized and prioritized**.
- Measures are in place to **ensure the safety and security of staff, volunteers and mobilizers** working in communities.

#### 14. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND BUDGETING

##### DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Resource mobilization and budgeting for community engagement should be based on a thorough and realistic analysis of the inputs required to achieved targets, including all personnel, coordination and operational costs.

##### ACTIONS

- **Adequate budgeting is allocated for all activities associated with undertaking community engagement** activities, including personnel and their support costs as the major program input, along with support for coordination and operational costs as well as process and outcome monitoring and evaluation.
- Adequately calculate and factor **key resource requirements such as transport and mobilizer ratios where relevant.**
- Advocate with funding agencies and government for **prioritization of resource allocation for community engagement.**
- **Integrate community engagement and accountability into all plans and budgets.**

For funders of community engagement:

- **Support budgets that include adequate financial support for all planned activities,** including allowing for the establishment of have realistic timelines.
- **Engage implementing organizations with proven experience and expertise in community engagement** approaches and that work to clearly defined standards.
- **Support the establishment of mechanisms to coordinate and integrate** the work of implementing agencies and communities.

## ANNEXES

## **ANNEX 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT CYCLE CHECKLIST**

This checklist is intended as a tool for developing a comprehensive snapshot of the community engagement planning, structures and processes that are in place at both project and country level. It prompts consideration of community engagement components through all stages of the project cycle, and also of key elements of what might create an enabling environment for more effective engagement.

The objective of the checklist as it stands is not to evaluate, nor is it anticipated that all elements of the checklist are appropriate for all contexts and programmatic goals. However, it can however provide a snapshot of the systems in place, along with guiding the process of capturing documentary evidence of community engagement approached and monitoring and evaluation design.

### **1. MINIMUM COMMON STANDARDS**

#### **1.1 PARTICIPATION**

- Were communities consulted, or have some level of involvement, in the design of the initiative?
- Are the expected impacts/outcomes of the community engagement approaches aligned with the project design methodologies (i.e. is there a clear theory of change linking the engagement with the outcomes)?
- Has the 'level of participation' been clearly and transparently defined (inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower)?
- Have vulnerable groups been identified for the target communities? Is there a mechanism for activity identifying and including vulnerable groups?
- Are processes in place to involve communities in key elements of design and management of activities? What are they?
- Are processes in place to ensure meaningful participation and representation of communities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities?
- Are processes in place for collaboration, shared learning, interactive participation throughout the engagement process?

#### **1.2 EMPOWERMENT**

- Are plans in place that consider:
  - Ensuring community members and their leadership are involved in the planning processes and supporting in decision-making around managing and monitoring activities?
  - Providing communities with opportunities to identify and contribute resources and skills to planned activities?
  - For communities and community leaders to have a direct role in decision making in all activities in their communities, including priorities and allocation of resources?
  - How to identify and foster new leadership from amongst those previously without a voice in decision-making?
  - Support to community leaders that wish to apply for and receive funding for ongoing activities?

#### **1.3 INCLUSION**

#### **1.4 COMMUNICATION**

- Has a communication plan been developed for the project to ensure that communities receive clear information about project intentions, methods and objectives and help organizations and facilitators to understand the local information ecosystem and community structures?
- Are there clear and functional lines of communication between relevant stakeholders and communities?
- Are mechanisms in place for ensuring bidirectional communication and feedback between communities and powerholders, including government and implementing organizations?
- Is the feedback mechanism structured to facilitate comprehensive information flow that includes both information on what is working in the project, what ideas communities have for improvements and project adjustments, current knowledge, attitudes and practices and reporting of rumors?
- Is there a process in place for communities to register complaints easily and safely and which include transparent, timely procedures for response and remedial actions?
- Are technology and digital platforms being utilized for facilitating information flow?

#### **1.5 ADAPTABILITY AND INCLUSION**

- Has consultation been undertaken with key stakeholders to learn about the needs and priorities of communities using population-based research approaches (e.g. KAPs)?
- During the planning stage, has bilateral communication with community leaders to understand local conditions, local needs, and local capacities in the community?
- Are community liaison representatives placed in communities to provide information to communities about project, and share community concerns?
- Has there been work undertaken with anthropologists and local community engagement workers to identify critical issues in advance of engagement?
- Is local and regional government to ensure alignment of community engagement actions with national and regional strategies?

#### **1.6 BUILDING ON LOCAL CAPACITIES**

- Are strategies in place to ensure that community stakeholders and local implementing organizations receiving the support and skills required to undertake the planned activities?
- Have capacity assessments been undertaken of communities or related community institutions or facilities to ensure actors have the capacity to implement and monitoring initiatives?
- Is community engagement strategies and approaches, either general or related to the project, mainstreamed within the training of health care and other frontline workers?
- Do national and state level authorities have the capacity to undertake the community engagement activities required of the project (for example based on the results of the checklist)?
- Has comprehensive CHW and community agent training been developed? Is the curriculum available for review?
- Is refresher training, supervision, mentoring and coaching being provided to frontline workers to address skills gaps and incorporate project changes based on feedback form communities?



- Is the relevant project running for at least three to five years to better support community capacity strengthening that will enable communities to sustain results and continue to improve community health outcomes?

## **2. PROJECT CYCLE COMPONENTS**

### **2.1 INFORMED DESIGN**

- Have you considered political, social, economic and geographic factors?
- Have you consulted with relevant experts and specialists to support context analysis?
- Have you conducted a needs assessment or reviewed existing needs assessments?
- Have you reviewed evaluations of community engagement activities in the target communities?
- Have you consulted with relevant experts and specialists to support context analysis?
- Are your proposed community engagement strategies appropriate for the national and regional government context?
- Have you developed proposals and corresponding budgets that value the costs associated with community engagement?
- Have you advocated with governments, donors and head offices to prioritize community engagement planning and resources?
- Can you anticipate areas in which you will need to be flexible in your programming to respond to community engagement inputs?
- Do you have clear guidelines for how communities are integrated into project structures?
- Do you have clear guidelines for how communities are engaged in data collection?
- Do you have clear guidelines for how communities are engaged in data analysis?
- Do you have clear guidelines for how communities are able to develop and use bidirectional communication and feedback mechanisms?
- Do you have the needed approvals to collect community data?
- Do you have a plan [with partners] for concluding the project/leaving the community at the end of the initiative?
- Is there a document of strategy that clearly defines how community engagement approaches are to be utilized?

### **2.2 COMMUNITY PREPARATION AND ASSESSMENT**

- Have you undertaken a partner mapping exercise that considers all partners needed for community engagement activities?
- Have you prioritized the inclusion of local government?
- Are you working with local CSOs and NGOs
  - Identify what support you are providing to local CSOs and NGOs, including capacity building, organizational strengthening, and efforts to promote sustainability.

- Are there linkages established between NGO partners across sectors? Can you liaise with other partners to achieve greater efficiency in community engagement activities and reduce community fatigue?
  - Can you confirm that you are not duplicating the activities of other partners?
- Are all relevant stakeholders informed about intended activities? This includes project design, project objectives, levels of commitment and sustainability/exit strategies.
- Have you sought and received formal approval in preparation for interaction with communities and other partners?
- Have you defined an approach that will “meet the communities where they are?” This can include localized approaches to meeting locations, meeting schedules, livelihoods and local events. It also includes demonstrations of cultural competency, including recognizing holidays, language, concepts and ideas.
- Have you defined which participatory approaches you are using (e.g. PLA, RRA, PRA, PAR, PPA, etc.)?
- Have you surveyed or mapped the communities using participatory approaches to document community needs and resources; or reviewed the mapping exercises that have been previously conducted?
- Have you shared the findings of your mapping exercise with community members?
- Have you identified and ensured the inclusion of vulnerable groups in participatory assessment? This may include persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, minorities, or LGBTI members.
- Are there local-level community capacities or approaches that can be expanded, copied, or invested in?
- Have you conducted capacity assessments of communities, community entities and partners to ensure actors have the capacity to implement and monitor initiatives?
- Do you have a data reporting plan for sharing data with all key stakeholders (your organization, the community, local government, partner organizations, etc.?) Do you know what data you can and cannot share and why?

### **2.3 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

- Are you working through community-based formal structures, informal structures, and social networks?
- Have you advocated with community leaders to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable or under-represented groups in key roles?
- Which participatory mechanisms have you chosen for selecting community leaders or representatives? Were your criteria inclusive, clear and transparent?
- Which participatory mechanisms have you chosen for selecting community mobilizers? Were your criteria inclusive, clear and transparent?
- Which participatory mechanisms have you chosen for selecting community groups? Were your criteria inclusive, clear and transparent?
  - Ensuring committees and groups are tailored to their participants, have a clear structure and have clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, including the development of policies and procedures.
- Consider the financial and non-financial incentives you are offering community leaders and community mobilizers:
  - Are they economically sufficient to compensate for anticipate time or labor?
  - Are they in line with government policy?

- Is the incentive consistent with the actions of other partners operating in the context?
- Has the incentive structure been clearly communicated to all community members?
- Who in the community is going to lead the community engagement process \in the community?
  - Are already-present community mobilizers (e.g. community health workers) positioned to lead the community engagement process?
- What training and support do mobilizers need to be effective? Is your organization positioned to provide this support and training? If not, who will?
- How are you supervising community groups to assess that groups are not engaged in activities or actions that undermine the program or action? What is your recourse if you learn that they are?
- Is a participatory process in place at community level for reaching agreement on identification of the issues to be addressed, setting priorities for action activities, resources required, roles and responsibilities and a timeline for implementation?
- Have you established clear and functional lines of communication, two-way communication, complaint and reporting mechanisms, and feedback between communities and stakeholders? Are these communication mechanisms understood and accessible to all stakeholders?
- Are the communication platforms you have selected accessible to the widest possible population? Is it compatible with other partners?

## **2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- Have you developed indicators in partnership with local mobilizers and communities?
- Are structures in place for the regular monitoring of engagement activities?
- Were/are communities trained to collect and analyze data?
- Are systems in place for the uptake of lessons learned from monitoring data?
- Are systems in place to enable communities to review data and data insights to inform decision making?
- Is data being regularly collected? Is the quality of data valid and reliable?
- Do monitoring plans entail the use of simple and quick tools?
- Have you engaged communities and stakeholders in the development and implementation of an evaluation plan?
- Do you have a plan for disseminating and sharing the findings of evaluations with communities, government, donors and other partners and stakeholders?
- Have you organized community meetings to ensure that all stakeholders understand and consent to plans for program exit, future sustainability, or handover of resources and project?
- Have you worked with government to consider how ministries and other departments can maintain programs initiated by implementing partners?

## **3. COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION**

### **3.1 COORDINATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.**

- Is there a regular process of mapping partners using community engagement approaches at community/district/regional level to avoid duplication of programming and geographic location?

- Is there a process for partners to map and share areas of activity?
- Is there a community engagement working group (or similar mechanism) established at regional or national level that includes key organizations and ministries working in communities?
- Is there a national strategy guiding community engagement, risk communication or similar activities?
- At Ministry level, is there a unit or section dedicated to health education and promotion, community engagement, social mobilization or behavior change communication?
- Are there standard operating practices or community engagement norms and standards at national level? At a national level, there is operational guidance on the roles of community engagement to implementing partners. For example, through the development of SOPs?
- Does the health ministry have a strategy guiding partners that undertake community engagement approaches?
- Is there national strategy or guidance for community engagement approaches within the context of the health system?
- In their national-level training for Community Health Workers? Is this regularly administered? How often?
- Does the government or partners promote the use of nationally and internationally mandated tools and guidelines for implementing community engagement?
- Are government/ministry mechanisms or inter-agency policies in place for sharing between community engagement partners that collect and store data?
- Do government and implementing partners share community-level data and evaluations?
- Do health partners develop and share community engagement technical capacity?

### **3.2 INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Is community mobilization integrated into broader national health strategies to complement and work with other components such as service strengthening, policy, training, communication, and logistics.
- Are activities being undertaken with and through local governments to ensure community engagement activities are integrated with, and aligned to, local strategies and policies.
- Is there clear guidelines for describing how community engagement and communities are integrated into project organizational structures, multi-level integration (national, subnational, community), meaningful data collection and analysis processes, and feedback mechanisms.
- Are national community engagement frameworks in place for how community engagement is integrated across all ministries?
- Are implementing agencies are accountable to government for ensuring that community engagement is aligned with national frameworks and strategies? If so, how?
- Is the community engagement strategy integrated with, and reinforced by, a range of approaches that includes mass media, targeted risk communication, interpersonal communication and advocacy?

## **4. OPERATIONAL COMPONENTS**

### **4.1 HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES**

- Are adequate human resources are allocated for the activities planned?

- Are their processes in place to recruit quality staff with the requisite participatory and organizational skills to support implementation and act as intermediaries with communities?
- Are government policies in place that structure and support incentives and payments for community health workers?
- Are there incentive or payment systems in place? Are these in line with government policy or developed in coordination with government and policies? Is there government level guidance for incentives or payments made by implementing agencies?
- Is the labor of community members being recognized and are incentives or payments proportionate to the labor required by the project?
- Are community engagement experts responsible for designing and managing initiatives related to community engagement, and ensuring that community engagement strategy is integrated across all sectors?
- Is there a dedicated community engagement counterpart within government or relevant ministries?
- Are dedicated community experts to act as focal points for other programmatic areas and are deployed to liaise with external partners and stakeholders on issues of community engagement?
- Are staff and community agents and other representative stakeholders part of an accountable management structure that enables clear lines of delegation and communication and ensures all parties are part of the decision-making process?
- Is there a gender element within key parts of the management structure?
- Is capacity building in community engagement institutionalized and prioritized at institutional or project level?
- Are measures in place to ensure the safety and security of staff, volunteers and mobilizers working in communities?

#### **4.2 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND MODELING**

- Has adequate budgeting is allocated for all activities associated with undertaking community engagement activities, including personnel and their support costs as the major program input, along with support for coordination and operational costs?
- Have key resource requirements such as transport and mobilizer ratios where relevant been adequately ratioed and factored?
- Advocate with funding agencies and government for prioritization of resource allocation for community engagement.
- Has community engagement and accountability been integrated into all plans and budgets?
- Does the government or ministry have budgets dedicate to, or incorporate, community engagement approaches?

For funders of community engagement:

- Has budgets been approved that include adequate financial support for all planned activities, including allowing for the establishment of have realistic timelines.
- Has implementing organizations with proven experience and expertise in community engagement approaches and that work to clearly defined standards.

- Support the establishment of mechanisms to coordinate and integrate the work of implementing agencies and communities.

Has adequate flexibility been attached to project funding for community engagement (to enable responsiveness to communities and their feedback)?