

Section 4: Note to Users

The tools in this section invite managers and other users to reflect critically on their agency's approach to engaging with communities and to consider a more community-led approach.

It also recognizes that many managers will have a host of practical questions about things such as qualities to look for in facilitators, the phases of engaging with communities, and the kinds of benchmarks one can use to tell whether one is on a productive track, among others.

Recognizing that there are no "final" or universal answers to these questions, the tools in this section seek to give illustrative examples that stir the imagination and invite one to think how it might go in a particular context.

Managers also may find it useful to have a more in-depth look at an example of community-led work, together with tools that were used to support it. For this reason, this section includes a case study from Sierra Leone and some of the tools used as part of the community-led work.

It is important to recognize, though, that there is no one-size-fits-all in regard to community-led approaches. The Sierra Leone example and tools are best seen as illustrations and should not be seen as prescriptions for how to do community-led work.

MGM 6. Sample Action Criteria

Note: These action criteria are illustrative only. Although action criteria may be set by external actors such as NGOs, they could also be set through a participatory dialogue with communities.

1. **Addresses a community-selected harm or harms to children.** The harm(s) should be child protection issues (defined broadly) that diverse people, including children, view as important and that are chosen by the community itself, without being pushed or guided toward it by outsiders. The harm(s) need not be the most important issues—they can be ones that people feel are ripe and feasible. Most likely, the selected harm(s) will be issues that communities had identified in the learning phase.

2. **Inter-community collaboration.** We want three communities to work together, if possible, in selecting which harm to address and in developing and implementing a community-led intervention. This collaboration enables co-learning across communities and likely strengthens the quality of the intervention. In practice, the collaboration means that all three communities will need to identify a commonly agreed harm to children to address, a commonly agreed intervention to address it, etc.

3. **Linking intervention.** The intervention involves collaboration—making a linkage (or strengthening an existing one)—between the three communities and a formal, government-led aspect of the national child protection system. This could involve social welfare, health, education, etc. This criterion rules out many otherwise valuable actions (e.g., livelihoods actions such as animal-rearing to prevent children from being out of school—unless such actions include collaboration with formal system stakeholders).

4. **Common action by all three communities.** There is one action plan for all three communities. That one action could address a single issue (e.g., teenage pregnancy) or multiple issues (e.g. a successful intervention for reducing teenage pregnancy would likely increase ongoing school attendance for girls, thereby addressing another risk). The common action could involve multiple facets. For example, an action to reduce teenage pregnancy might have (but does not “have to” include) things such as condom distribution, reproductive health education by health workers, and community health education. Individual communities could still improvise, yet the improvisations would be in the service of the wider action plan.

5. **Likely to be effective.** One of the challenges in community-led work is not to support community actions that have proven to be ineffective in different settings. The facilitator will need to work with communities to help them reflect on the likely effectiveness of different approaches and, if needed, to learn from other resources such as other communities or NGOs.

6. **Social justice.** The action should be owned and supported by diverse people, including marginalized people, children, and people outside the chiefs’ family, favorites, etc. It also means that the action “belongs” to all three communities, and is not guided mainly by people in only one community.

7. **Ripeness.** People in both the villages and the government office involved should be enthusiastic and ready to implement or support the action. The implication is that community discussions and government discussions need to be initiated around the same time. It would be unproductive for communities to select an action that involves stronger links with social workers if the Ministry that oversees social workers was unsupportive.

8. **Feasibility.** The action should be doable, keep within budget constraints, and not be hindered by excessive logistical requirements (e.g., weekly visits during the rainy season when the rivers flood and bridges wash out) or political complexities.

9. **Low-cost.** We don't want a fancy action that is costly and unsustainable. We're basically facilitating straightforward actions that include sustainable, useful linkages.

10. **Sustainability.** If the community action is likely to end or collapse at the end of the funding period, then it is unsustainable. The action should be a process and piece of work that community people and government workers will carry forward even after the end of the funding.

11. **Ethics.** The action process and the steps taken should respect ethical principles, avoid causing unintended harm, and manage ethical issues such as raised expectations.