



Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement



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The consultation process consisted of a series of interviews, meetings and workshops over an 18-month period. Representatives from countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America contributed input and feedback based on their experiences of designing, implementing and measuring community engagement approaches.

Working groups from both the development and humanitarian spheres were established to support the lead consultants in their work; and while their individual names are not included here (and they are represented by their organizations below) UNICEF wishes to acknowledge their important contributions.

Contributing organizations (alphabetically):

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) * CARE * CLTS Knowledge Hub * CORE Group* Global Health Action * International Federation of the Red Cross * International Rescue Committee * Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs * London School of Health and Tropical Medicine * Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) * Medair * Médecins Sans Frontières * Mercy Corps * Movement for Community-led Development * Oxfam * Plan UK * Restless Development * Save the Children * United States Agency for International Development (USAID) * Wellcome Trust * World Health Organization (WHO) * World Vision USA.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CE	Community Engagement
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CHW	Community Health Worker
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIA	Health Impact Assessment
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning Action
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessments
PRA	Participatory Research and Assessment or Participatory Rural Appraisal
RFP	Request for Proposal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



01

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BACKGROUND

Community engagement is a critical component of international development practice and humanitarian assistance. Around the world and across contexts, community engagement approaches support communities in taking their own action in addressing their most pressing issues. Community engagement is intrinsic to the human rights based approach, which is a UN guiding principle. Communities should be listened to, and have a meaningful role in processes and issues that affect them.

The *Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement* were developed through a consultative inter-agency process supported by UNICEF's Communication for Development.* They are intended as a tool for development and humanitarian actors and the governments they support. This document sets forth core minimum standards developed in line with the principles of human rights- and community-based approaches, such as participation, inclusion and accountability. It seeks to ensure the meaningful integration of community engagement standards in all aspects of community engagement practice, including project cycles, methodologies, participatory approaches, integration, coordination and resource mobilization. The document focuses on essential quality criteria recognized by communities, governments, practitioners and researchers as creating an enabling environment for intentional, purposeful deliberation and action.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

The purpose of the *Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement* is to establish a common language among all stakeholders for defining community engagement principles, key actions, goals and benchmarks. They provide guidance for gender-sensitive community engagement approaches in high-, middle- and low-income countries, and in development and humanitarian contexts, across all sectors.

These standards support direct implementation by establishing the principles and parameters for communities to plan, take action and be heard in all matters affecting them. They are meant to serve as a guide for stakeholders in establishing an enabling environment for robust community engagement practice. The standards do not presuppose that community engagement requires external interventions, nor that specific or prescribed community engagement approaches are always optimal in all contexts.

The standards reflect a consensus around the need to rethink community engagement to meet the governance, development, humanitarian, and public health responses of the twenty-first century. The impetus for this document comes from the growing recognition of the social determinants of development and the importance of community-level action, leadership and ownership in all aspects of policy, research and practice.

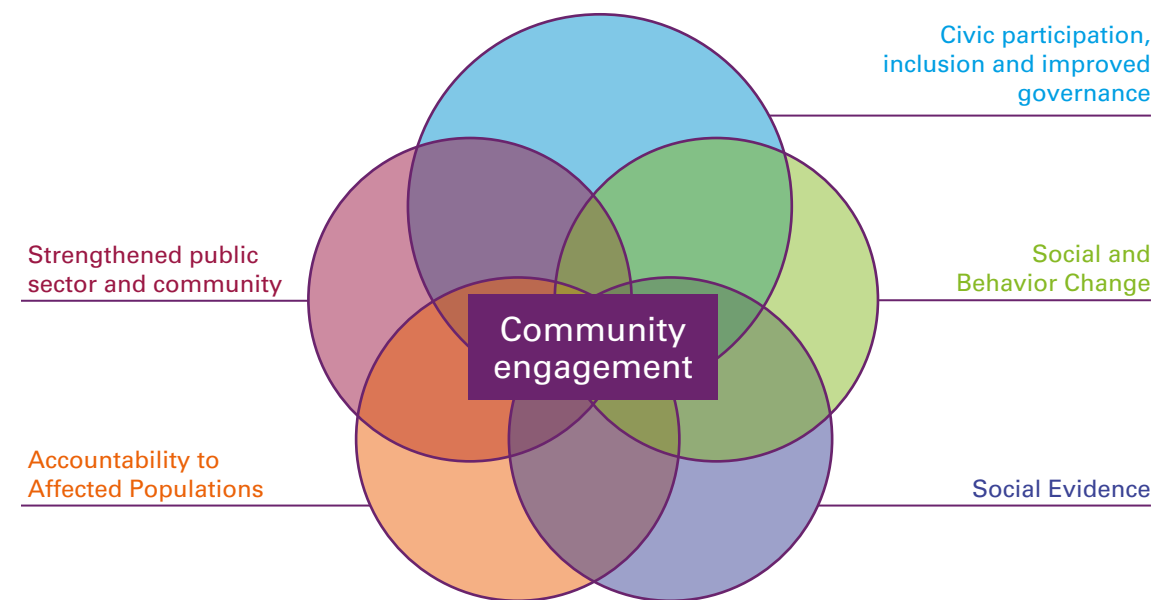
* In the current UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, one of the 'cross-cutting strategies' common to all goal areas identified as a priority for accelerating the achievement of Strategic Plan results is Communication for Development: "Invest in Communication for Development (C4D) strategies, in both humanitarian and development contexts, to address discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, values and expectations".

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Introduction

Community engagement sits at the intersection of five global objectives: public sector systems strengthening; accountability to affected populations (AAP); social accountability; social and behavioural change & social norms; and community systems strengthening. It connects a wide range of sector-specific development and humanitarian objectives (for example, UNICEF's core areas of WASH, nutrition, community health, education, gender, and child protection) with governance goals (such as decentralization, transparency, democratization, climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and social accountability). Figure 1 illustrates the intersectional nature of community engagement practice.

FIGURE 1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT



Several international agreements in recent years (e.g. The Grand Bargain, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness) have highlighted the need for improved practice, coordination, integration and measurement of community engagement. These approaches are essential components of community systems strengthening, with multifaceted implications for aid effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability across all domains.

These standards address four challenges in current community engagement practice:

- **Quality:** These standards define the fundamental elements of all approaches that can be understood as representing 'quality' design and implementation. To date, there have been a wide variety of approaches and interpretations of what constitutes 'quality' community engagement. Community engagement is used for a range of process and outcome objectives. Process objectives include achieving participation, achieving acceptance of a particular response, changing behaviours or social norms, encouraging buy-in or ownership, and empowering communities to take action. Outcomes objectives include other aims that are achieved by means of community engagement.
- **Accountability:** Concerns over the effectiveness of development and humanitarian practice has resulted in a call for greater accountability between implementing agencies, donors and financial institutions, governments and communities. In the case of community engagement, accountability demands that those responsible for community engagement approaches are fulfilling this responsibility through transparency in design, implementation and evaluation. Standards are intended to provide the tools for those that relevant institutions are accountable to – especially communities and their representatives – to assess whether this responsibility is being fulfilled.

- **Harmonization:** Standards facilitate the harmonization of approaches across organizations and contexts. Often, implementing organizations have their own mandates, missions, methodologies and objectives for working with communities. Many have their own institutional standards and guidelines for community engagement and participatory approaches. However, these approaches are not necessarily always complementary, nor well integrated or coordinated within a given context. Achieving quality at scale requires the establishment of common languages, criteria, benchmarks and actions.
- **Optimization:** Community engagement requires systemization, resources, and sound policies to ensure quality and accountability. 'More' community engagement is not necessarily 'better' or 'safer' community engagement. Research on community engagement shows that an optimization-oriented approach is needed. This marks a shift from 'minimum' and 'comprehensive' community engagement strategies. Humanitarian contexts, in particular, require a streamlined, rapid approach to community engagement that may require the focused application of the minimum standards, particularly in relation to the need to prioritize risk analysis and risk mitigation.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The *Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement* are intended for use by government leaders, policymakers, funders, researchers, and development and humanitarian practitioners. Specific areas in which the suggested standard and indicators might be applied include proposal writing, budgeting, budgetary review, monitoring & evaluation systems, standard operating procedures, requests for proposals, scopes of work, and job descriptions. They also can be used to evaluate the quality of programmes, projects, or initiatives; to structure community engagement actions, and to support training and capacity development efforts.

- **Standards:** The minimum quality standards for community engagement are divided into four categories: Core Standards, Implementation, Coordination and Integration, and Resource Mobilization. Across those categories, there are 16 unique standards for community engagement. The four-part structure of the standards, as well as each of the 16 standards, should be used to guide the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and funding of development and humanitarian programmes, and to inform policy development at the national and local levels.
- **Indicators:** Community engagement indicators have been developed to support the measurement of the minimum standards. Here, two sets of indicators are presented: (1) for national and local governments, and (2) for NGOs, CSOs and implementing agencies. It is not a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework, and these indicators are not intended to be adopted across all programmes and contexts. These community engagement indicators are designed to be adapted to local contexts and organizational needs and purposes. They should be aligned to programme and institutional goals, and local and institutional experts should seek to modify, adapt, build upon, or otherwise transform these indicators so that they are fit for purpose. These indicators are recommended for use as a reference for localized, specific and targeted research, monitoring, and evaluations of community engagement. They should be used to inspire the development of new indicators in partnership with governments and local communities (a tool has been provided for this in Annex 3).
- **Checklists:** Two checklists have been provided as a tool in the Annexes: a Community Engagement Project Cycle Checklist (Annex 1); and a Funding Institution Checklist (Annex 2). These checklists should be used to design institutional and process-specific checklists to ensure the alignment of community engagement standards with institutional inputs and outcomes. They should be used to assess if the standards have been adequately addressed and included at all stages of programme and policy design. They can support the creation of an enabling environment for quality community engagement.

HOW THE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

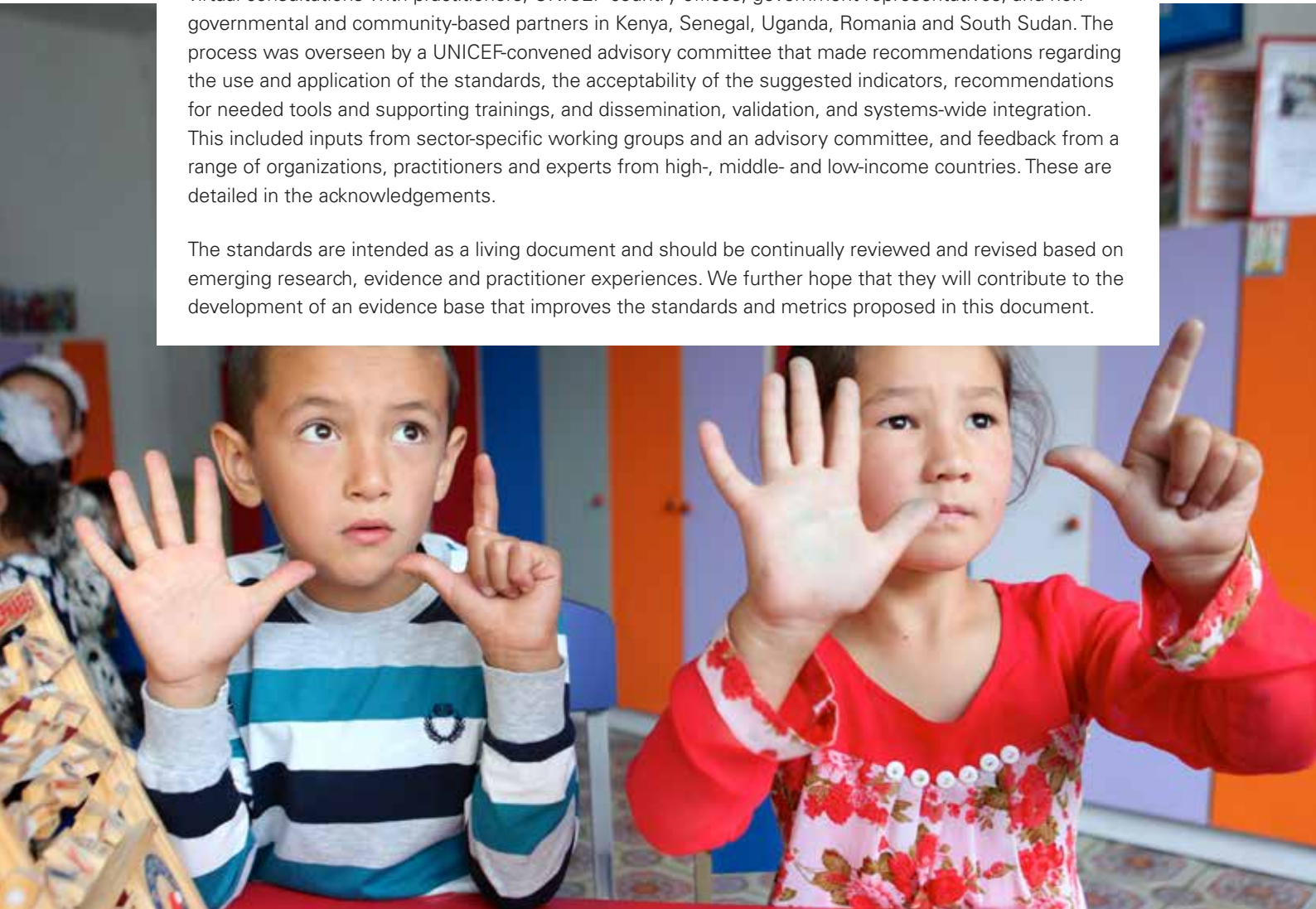
UNICEF Communication for Development (C4D) led the development of these standards and indicators through a multi-country, multi-stakeholder consultation process with UN agencies, government actors, local and international NGOs, development and humanitarian response networks, UNICEF country offices and regional advisors, donors and community engagement workers.

This document is designed as an inter-agency and government guidance tool to improve community engagement policy and practice; and as a guidance document for UNICEF. It is broadly based on the architecture of the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines*, which includes standards, quality criteria and actions.

The methodology used to develop this document was designed to capture current best practices in the field of community engagement, and to identify existing challenges that could be improved on through the adoption of community engagement minimum standards. The standards review included a review of over 450 documents, which included UN declarations, human rights principles, humanitarian and development accords and agreements, and community engagement standards, practitioner guidelines, toolkits, and handbooks written for development and humanitarian practice. The review that informed the community engagement indicators was based on a comprehensive review of existing frameworks for monitoring and evaluation, and a comprehensive compilation and review of 1000+ community engagement indicators, interviews with monitoring and evaluation experts, and a review of the academic literature on community engagement evidence and effectiveness.

The review informed an 18-month consultative process from 2018 to 2019 with policymakers, practitioners and researchers. This process included consultations with sector-specific working groups, who ultimately recommended universal, rather than sector-specific, standards and guidelines. It also included remote virtual consultations with practitioners, UNICEF country offices, government representatives, and non-governmental and community-based partners in Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, Romania and South Sudan. The process was overseen by a UNICEF-convened advisory committee that made recommendations regarding the use and application of the standards, the acceptability of the suggested indicators, recommendations for needed tools and supporting trainings, and dissemination, validation, and systems-wide integration. This included inputs from sector-specific working groups and an advisory committee, and feedback from a range of organizations, practitioners and experts from high-, middle- and low-income countries. These are detailed in the acknowledgements.

The standards are intended as a living document and should be continually reviewed and revised based on emerging research, evidence and practitioner experiences. We further hope that they will contribute to the development of an evidence base that improves the standards and metrics proposed in this document.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

The concept of community and community engagement is complex and nuanced and requires mutual agreement. Figure 2 presents original definitions for both concepts that emerged from consultations.

FIGURE 2. DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
The minimum social unit that is locally relevant just above the level of the household (neighbourhood, canton, precinct, parish, town, village). It can also include non-geographically centred social networks of interaction, interchange and interdependency. Such networks may have direct local inputs into the transfer of health, educational, social, informational, economic, cultural and political resources (diaspora networks, rural-urban networks, peer-group or social networks, kinship networks). Communities are not monolithic, and often include unequal distributions of authority, access, and power over decision-making and resources (by gender, sociocultural background, physical and mental ability, ethnicity, language and religion/faith).	A foundational action for working with traditional, community, civil society, government, and opinion groups and leaders; and expanding collective or group roles in addressing the issues that affect their lives. Community engagement empowers social groups and social networks, builds upon local strengths and capacities, and improves local participation, ownership, adaptation and communication. Through community engagement principles and strategies, all stakeholders gain access to processes for assessing, analysing, planning, leading, implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions, programmes and policies that will promote survival, development, protection and participation.

The role of community engagement is to empower communities, community leaders and community organizations to play a role in improving the equity and impact of the government, development, and humanitarian initiatives that affect them. The minimum quality standards provide guidance and support in achieving the following aims:

- **Communities are meaningful stakeholders in two-way**, transparent and open flows of information. Mechanisms are in place to sustain two-way communication.
- **Communities know and claim their rights**. They have meaningful ownership and leadership roles in the deliberations, decision-making, design, implementation and measurement of actions that affect them.
- **Community diversity is reflected in participatory processes without discrimination**, including gender, ability, age, faith, race, ability and ethnicity.
- **Community-based power inequalities are addressed**, not reinforced, through community engagement actions.
- **Communities have mechanisms to register concerns and provide continuous feedback** on the quality, availability, accessibility and acceptability of services. This feedback is listened to, and appropriate responses are taken.
- **Programmes, projects and policies are adapted to and aligned with the needs**, priorities, values and cultures of local populations.
- **Programmes, projects and policies are adapted to and aligned with the needs**, priorities and policies of national, subnational and local governments.
- **The quality of research, evaluation and monitoring of community engagement is tied to community structures**, processes and ownership, so that communities have influence over research documenting the issues that impact them.

Community engagement can be utilized as a **primary approach** for strengthening community capacity to explore, plan, and act together on issues identified by communities themselves. As an ‘end in itself’, community engagement is specifically focused on empowering and strengthening communities to explore, plan, and act together on issues communities identify as most important. It can also be deployed as an **instrumental approach**, or a ‘means to an end’, that uses engagement or mobilization methodologies to accomplish goals or outcomes like health, education, nutrition, or social welfare outcomes, in a participatory and empowering manner that promotes sustainability.

Community engagement is a means of promoting the accountability of development and humanitarian actors by facilitating and structuring ongoing communication on the appropriateness and effectiveness of initiatives and engaging men, women, boys and girls directly in the planning and measurement of activities. In all its forms, it is a participatory process. It should be gender-sensitive, context-specific, risk-informed, localized, responsive and bidirectional. Flexibility and adaptability are important when applying the minimum quality standards. Context, including political and sociocultural 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. There is no ‘pure’ state of community action or participation, and these standards recognize that communities are continuously adapting in dynamic and changing environments.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR THIS DOCUMENT

The fundamental principles informing the Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement are drawn from, and align with, international frameworks guiding development and humanitarian assistance (see bibliography for citations). These standards are intended to be used as a complement to and in conjunction with broader standards guiding development and humanitarian practice (see Table 1). These ensure that a rights-based approach, equity, diversity, accessibility, local capacity and empowerment are embedded throughout community engagement activities.

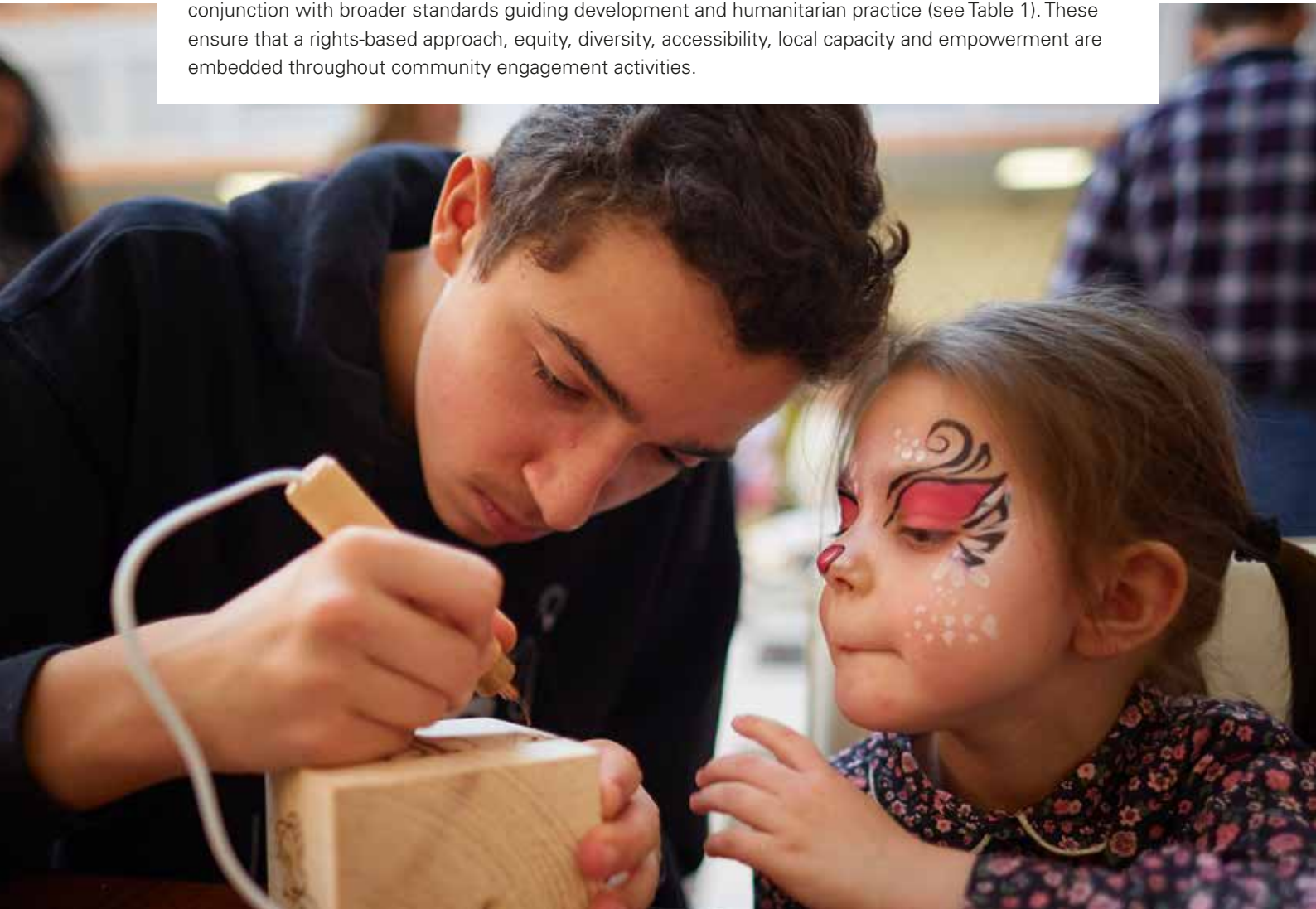


TABLE 1. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
Rights-based approach	Human rights-based approaches integrate the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the policies, programmes and processes of development and humanitarian actors. ^{1–5} Human rights-based analyses take into account the imperative to expand equity, empower rights-holders to claim their rights, and enable duty-bearers to meet their obligations. It prioritizes meaningful participation, equal rights for all, accountability, and the integration of human rights in legal and policy frameworks while simultaneously recognizing the need for risk identification and risk mitigation.
Community-based approach	Community-based approaches support women, girls, boys and men to participate in a process which allows them to express their needs and to decide their own future with a view to their empowerment. A community-based approach reinforces the dignity and self-esteem of people of concern and empowers all actors. It requires the recognition that they are meaningful participants in decision-making. Community leaders, groups and networks work to prevent social problems and to deal directly with those that do arise, rather than requiring that external actors step in and assume these responsibilities. ^{6–8} It includes understanding community concerns and priorities, mobilizing community members, supporting collective community decision-making, building on traditional social practices of community cooperation, and engaging social networks.
Accountability	Development and humanitarian actors have a responsibility to be accountable to local populations for their actions, priorities and resource allocation decisions. Governments can play a leadership role in establishing an enabling environment for development and humanitarian accountability through the structures, systems and practices established through community engagement. Additionally, robust community engagement and public engagement capacity can support transparency, responsibility and responsiveness between governments and local populations, and local populations and local community leaders. ^{9,10,19–21,11–18}
Gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming involves ensuring that gendered analysis, gender perspectives, and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. ^{22,23}
Interests of the Child	The best ‘interests of the child’ is a rights principle based on Article 3 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. It states that ‘In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.’ ²⁴
Do No Harm	The principle of Do No Harm should be extended to community engagement practice. Community engagement bears risks and opportunities for individual participants and communities. While community engagement can increase ownership, empowerment, participation, service utilization and local capacity, it can incur physical, economic, political and social costs. It has been demonstrated, in many cases, to exacerbate discrimination, unequal distribution of resources, stigmatization and abuse. ²⁵ Furthermore, insecure management of community engagement data can lead to privacy and security concerns for affected populations. These standards provide guidance to support efforts to mainstream a ‘Do No Harm’ approach in community engagement practice.



2

Community Engagement Minimum Standards

The Community Engagement Standards are organized into four sections and cover core standards, implementation, coordination and integration, and resource mobilization. Table 2 provides a summary of the Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement. These include:

PART A: Core Community Engagement Standards

These describe the fundamental standards that should guide community engagement practice. They should be mainstreamed across all aspects of practice. They are cross-cutting, and should be applied to all aspects of standards included in Parts B, C and D.

PART B: Standards Supporting Implementation

These standards are aligned to elements of the project cycle. They define the scope of practice for engaging communities. They explicitly target informed design, planning and preparation, management of activities, and monitoring and evaluation.

PART C: Standards Supporting Coordination and Integration

These standards focus on supporting collective, harmonized and mutually supportive community engagement practice at national and local levels. Coordination addresses how partners coordinate their activities with other partners, government, response clusters/pillars, and communities. It supports policy and strategy alignment and common protocols and resolves geographic and functional duplication. Integration involves the inclusion of community engagement in all aspects of development programming, governance, and humanitarian response structures, systems, policies and plans. Governments have a primary role in leading the coordination and integration of community engagement in 'peacetime' and emergency contexts.

PART D: Standards Supporting Resource Mobilization

Standards supporting resource mobilization focus on key management and administrative considerations that determine quality community engagement. The resourcing of community engagement is human capital intensive and can require complex operational imperatives that involve significant budgetary consideration, like human resources, training, significant time investments, logistics, and safety and security protocols.

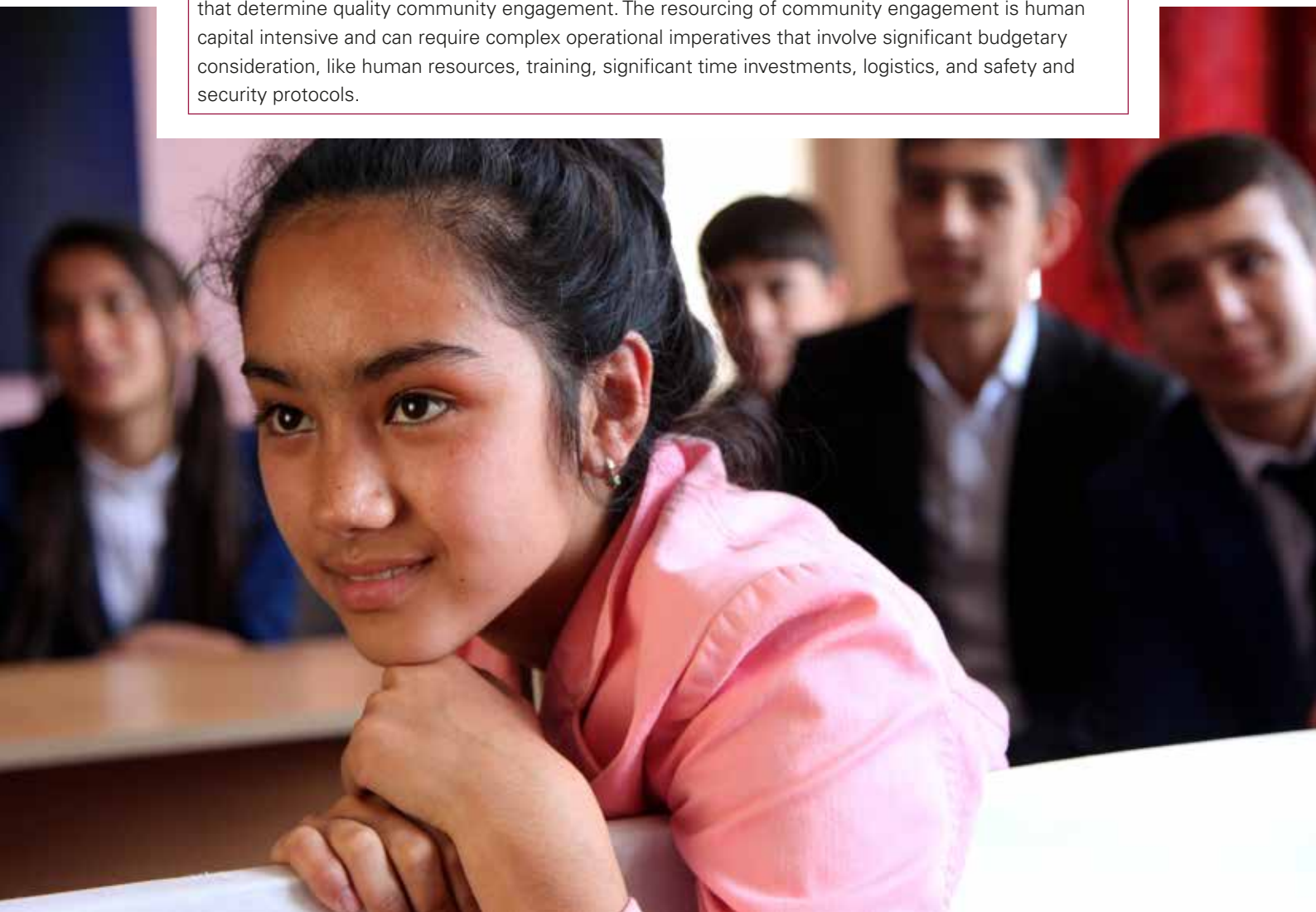


TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PART A: Core Community Engagement Standards	PART B: Standards Supporting Implementation
 1. Participation	 7. Informed Design
 2. Empowerment and Ownership	 8. Planning and Preparation
 3. Inclusion	 9. Managing Activities
 4. Two-way Communication	 10. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
 5. Adaptability and Localization	
 6. Building on Local Capacity	
PART C: Standards Supporting Coordination and Integration	PART D: Standards Supporting Resource Mobilization
 11. Government Leadership	 14. Human Resources and Organizational Structures
 12. Partner Coordination	 15. Data Management
 13. Integration	 16. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting

2.1 HOW TO READ THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

The community engagement minimum standards are intended to support community engagement in all its facets. Each standard consists of a Description, Quality Criteria, and Actions.

2.1.1 Description of the Standard

This description provides a summary rationale for each standard. They are universally applicable across all contexts and settings.

2.1.2 Quality Criteria

These standard-derived principles detail the minimum targets needed to achieve quality community engagement. They are universally applicable across all contexts and settings.

2.1.3 Actions

These actions, listed in the form of bullet points below each criterion, provide advice for operationalization of the standard. They are meant to be flexible and should be selected or adapted to local contexts as needed.



3

An Introduction to the Community Engagement Minimum Standards

PART A

CORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS

The core minimum standards (numbered 1 to 6 below) should be prioritized at all levels of community engagement implementation, in all contexts.

STANDARD 1

participation



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Communities assess their own needs and participate in the analysis, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of governance, development and humanitarian initiatives. Community views and needs are given due weight in all aspects of policy, planning, research and practice.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

1.1 Meaningful participation is recognized as a right and is essential for informed decision-making and collective self-determination.

- Have clear objectives for levels of participation of men, women, boys and girls based on necessary minimums for achieving outcomes and impacts.
- There should be transparency about the proposed levels of participation that is ensured and facilitated with information that is gender- and age-sensitive, contextually appropriate and in line with planning activities.

1.2 Processes and policies are in place for collaboration, shared learning and interactive participation throughout the engagement process.

- Develop processes that ensure the involvement of communities in key elements of design and management of activities.
- Identify community priorities, resources, needs, and solutions, and ensure that they are integrated into project and response plans.
- Maintain a robust community role in decision-making processes through clear linkages between community structures, governments, and development and humanitarian actors.
- Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action.

1.3 Established and recognized participatory methods and approaches are employed to ensure the participation of communities.

- Employ recognized participatory approaches such as Participatory Learning Action (PLA); Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA); Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA); Participatory Research and Assessment (PRA); Participatory Action Research (PAR); Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA); Health Impact Assessment (HIA); Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA).
- Ensure that community engagement approaches are locally relevant, gender, age and culturally appropriate and in languages and formats that are understood by all members of the community.
- Balance the imperative for ‘quick results’ with the need for participatory processes.

STANDARD 2

empowerment and ownership



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Communities have opportunities to own and feel empowered by community engagement processes. Empowerment is both a process and an outcome of community engagement and participatory practice.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

2.1 Programmes work with existing community structures and strategies in order to facilitate community decision-making and ownership.

- Ensure that communities are involved in the planning and implementation of activities, including decision-making related to management and monitoring so that they reflect local priorities, needs and allocation of resources.
- Identify and mobilize community assets and strengths, and support community capacity and resources to make decisions and take action.
- Support communities to develop action plans that clearly outline objectives, roles, responsibilities and strategies that communities can implement, monitor and evaluate. Action plans should clearly outline the mutual responsibilities of communities and organizations.
- Identify and promote existing community self-help and resilience strategies.
- Support the initiatives of local groups and organizations.

2.2 Advocacy takes place to ensure that communities are leaders in decision-making, and in the actions that affect the community.

- Identify trusted community leaders, influencers and key stakeholders, including representatives outside formal structures.
- Identify and foster leadership from among those most disadvantaged, discriminated against and marginalized. Work to understand gender roles and power dynamics within communities and how changes in power can be catalysed and supported.
- Advocate for the decisions of community leaders.

2.3 Community resource capacities (labour, time, financial and material) and limitations are recognized and negotiated in decisions about resource contributions.

- Determine roles and responsibilities regarding the resourcing of activities.
- Work with communities to ensure there is clear agreement about the identification and contribution of appropriate resources and skills to planned activities.
- Recognize that in-kind requirements or indirect inputs can be a burden to community members. Understand that voluntarism does not equal empowerment, nor is it always an appropriate expectation for a demonstration of community ownership.
- Support communities if long-term sustainability is an expectation. This requires planning, resources and inputs to ensure that activities continue beyond the life of the initiatives.

STANDARD 3

inclusion



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community members and groups that are under-represented, disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized are identified, supported, and ensured of a role and a voice in all aspects of community engagement. This includes discriminated against, deprived, and disadvantaged groups such as poor households, persons with disabilities, adolescents and youth, the elderly, children, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous communities, religious minorities, LGBTI community members and women. Safety considerations should be taken into account in implementation of this standard.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

3.1 Disadvantaged, discriminated against, deprived and marginalized social groups in communities are identified to ensure activities are accessible, appropriate and relevant to their needs.

- Create and implement processes for identifying under-represented, disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized groups in communities. This can include, but is not limited to, vulnerability mapping exercises.
- Conduct a risk analysis to identify potential risks to local sub-groups by participation and communication practices.
- Determine the risk mitigation measures required to achieve inclusion in community engagement actions.
- Identify the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to participation for disadvantaged and marginalized groups – for example physical, access, movement and organizational barriers. Design and support strategies to overcome or remove barriers.
- Advocate within communities for the inclusion of marginalized groups (such as adolescents, etc.).

3.2 Disadvantaged and marginalized social groups are included in activities and decision-making and have access to services.

- Respond to the priorities and needs identified by marginalized and disadvantaged community members.
- Ensure the diverse representation of local populations by addressing access issues, unequal burdens of participation, participation in activities, leadership roles, participatory planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- Conduct mapping processes to ensure that the barriers to access for marginalized community members are identified.
- Prioritize the equitable distribution of benefits across all segments of the population, according to programme purpose and intent.
- Develop feedback pathways from vulnerable and under-represented groups that can be included in, but are distinct from, broader feedback mechanisms.

STANDARD 4

two-way communication



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Communities give and receive clear, appropriate and accurate information through two-way communication pathways on a regular and predictable basis in order to ensure access to information and participation.²⁶

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

4.1 Systematic two-way communication mechanisms are established between communities and all relevant stakeholders, including government and implementing organizations.

- Establish clear and functional lines of two-way communication for routine feedback. Establish new, multi-approach mechanisms of communication when existing structures are unavailable for any reason. Create redundancies if necessary, in order to reach marginalized and vulnerable populations.
- Identify community members who can work as focal points for information dissemination.
- Discuss and obtain consent for communication between communities and stakeholders, including government and implementing organizations.
- Mobilize communications using existing structures when available.
- Structure feedback mechanisms to facilitate comprehensive information flow.
- Establish systematic and transparent mechanisms through which people can register dissent and raise issues.
- Plan and implement feedback strategies to share monitoring, evaluation and learning findings with communities, and to provide communities with access to data.
- Assess communication strategies throughout implementation to ensure that they are effective and meeting the needs of communities and all related stakeholders.

4.2 Communities should be listened to, heard and believed; this should be directly evidenced in design and implementation.

- Ensure that communities receive clear information about project intentions, methods and objectives.
- Use the successful integration of community feedback as an indicator of programme success.
- Ensure that community priorities inform and guide all programme activities.

STANDARD 5

adaptability and localization



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement approaches are developed based on local contexts. They should be flexible and responsive to local populations’ needs, conditions, and concerns. 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.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

5.1 Community engagement approaches and models are adapted to the local context.

- Work with communities to understand local conditions, needs and capacities.
- Take into consideration national and regional political, cultural or historical circumstances and how they impact community agreement, and acceptance of, and responsiveness to, community engagement initiatives.
- Adapt community engagement tools to local languages and contexts. Use participatory approaches, two-way communication, and local validation to ensure local relevance.
- Use qualitative and mixed method approaches to develop a holistic understanding of the local context.

5.2 Adaptability and flexibility are prioritized in design and implementation.

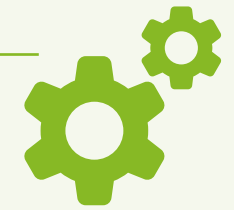
- Ensure that budgetary planning anticipates local adaptation and localization.
- Assess whether community engagement approaches are responsive to ideas, needs and priorities expressed by community members over time.
- Monitor and assess the demands imposed upon communities and adjust accordingly.

5.3 Communities are communicated with in linguistically and culturally appropriate formats. Communications should be reflective of a wide range of community knowledge and information demands.

- Understand the local information ecosystem and community communication pathways. Identify barriers to communication or difficulties accessing communication among marginalized, discriminated against, vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.
- Communicate in the correct format and language and through appropriate channels. Work in minority and indigenous languages, with fluent local residents. This includes interpersonal communication, community and household-level meetings, mobile phone, media and digital/social media platforms.
- Develop strategies that build on changing community demands for information. Prepare for rapid escalations in demand for information access, a demand for a high quality of information, and the need to deliver and receive complex information effectively.

STANDARD 6

building on local capacity



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement should build on the existing skills and resources of communities and the local groups and organizations that serve them.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

6.1 Community engagement approaches are employed to foster strong communities that are capable of self-sufficiency, independence and sustainable development.

- Recognize that communities have existing skills, strengths and resources, such as local associations of youth, women and disadvantaged groups. Use a strengths-based approach to programme design and implementation.
- Strengthen the skills, resources and assets identified by and within communities, and support the development of new and complementary skills and capacities.
- Clearly determine which activities the community can undertake itself and activities for which the support of service providers will be required.
- Design capacity development activities that build on skills and tools that are locally relevant and incorporate local knowledge and expertise.
- Adopt and sustain equitable partnerships with local actors to build on their long-term relationships and trust with communities.

6.2 Training and capacity-building is tailored to the needs of each community; and to community members’ skills and expertise.

- Plan realistic timeframes for community engagement activities to accommodate the need to build or expand required capacity.
- Provide training and capacity development that is based on realistic assessments of existing strengths and resource gaps. Build on local social, educational and institutional structures as platforms for learning and capacity.
- Build local capacity to interpret and use information and data.
- Design capacity-building that strengthens community resilience and the ability to withstand threats or shocks, and adapt to new livelihood options, in ways that preserve integrity and that do not deepen vulnerability.

PART B

STANDARDS SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

Section B standards are broadly aligned to the project cycle. They support project design, participatory planning, managing activities, and monitoring and evaluation.

STANDARD 7

informed design



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Informed design is a project design approach that ensures that community engagement initiatives are contextually appropriate. It requires contextual analysis and alignment with international standards and principles, and results in the capacity to be responsive to information gained during consultation with communities and governments. Informed design involves the participation and inclusion of a wide range of partners and stakeholders over a suitable timeframe with the financial and human resources, strategies, methodologies and approaches that are best suited to achieving objectives.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

7.1 Initiatives are designed based on a thorough contextual analysis of communities.

- Conduct a contextual analysis to ensure that relevant cultural, political, social, economic and geographic factors are taken into consideration when developing or adapting initiatives.
- Conduct community mapping exercises, including vulnerability mapping to identify vulnerable, marginalized or at-risk individuals, groups and populations.
- Ensure that risk analysis and risk mitigation are prioritized in mapping and research activities.
- Utilize existing data available from national and local government sources when conducting contextual analyses.
- Establish and document an understanding of the communication culture, language and customs to facilitate meaningful, non-discriminatory and respectful engagement with various affected communities.
- Identify and complement existing government, local civil society organizations and NGO activities.
- Collect and use baseline data during the preparatory stages of the project. When possible, use existing sources of data to avoid fatiguing communities.

7.2 Community engagement approaches are in line with government policies and international standards for human rights, humanitarian response, and international development practice.

- Use community engagement approaches that build on, and are in line with, relevant institutional, national or international standards and approaches.

7.3 Projects are designed to accommodate community engagement dynamics and community inputs.

- Design projects, including proposals and corresponding budgets, that anticipate and evaluate the costs associated with effective community engagement.
- Provide adequate time and resources within the project period to collect and analyse high-quality qualitative data.
- Put into place transition and exit strategies that realistically address the continuity/sustainability of activities, and the need to maintain skills, infrastructure, and labour resources to achieve outcomes, and that avoid negative disruption or harm to communities.

STANDARD 8

planning and preparation



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Planning and preparation are undertaken collaboratively with communities in advance of implementation activities. This includes initial engagement with communities, partner identification, and participatory assessment. It involves the direct participation of community members in identifying key community groups, individual leaders and potential leaders, determining community priorities, and deciding on appropriate mechanisms for resolving issues.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

8.1 Initial engagements with communities are treated as a pivotal entry point for partnership and collaboration.

- Seek and receive formal approval and acceptance from local leadership and community representatives, in preparation for any interaction with communities.
- Provide communities with information about project intentions, methods and objectives and help organizations and facilitators to understand the local information ecosystem and community structures.
- Meet communities where they are. Use appropriate meeting spaces, take into consideration livelihoods, timing of local holidays and cultural activities, use appropriate language, concepts and ideas to explain the intention of the programme.

8.2 Partner identification is conducted in order to ensure local self-determination, ownership and prioritization.

- Seek the participation and leadership of key partner and stakeholder groups, including social and youth clubs, cooperatives, business, schools, private sector, religious, ethnic, disability and political groups, and individuals with technical expertise.
- Listen to relevant stakeholders in partner communities.
- Inform key stakeholders in a gender, age, and culturally appropriate manner. Be prepared to answer questions.
- Ensure that the process is responsive. Be prepared to re-orient programme and project design in response to feedback.
- Ensure that any financial incentives provided to communities are aligned to government policies, in line with current evidence and best practice and are applied consistently and reliably.

8.3 Community assessments and mapping exercises are undertaken in partnership with communities.

- Use participatory assessments to identify community needs, capacities, resources, support structures, communication channels, practices and behaviours, and stakeholders.
- Share data and discuss the results of any participatory assessments with communities in ways that are accessible and appropriate.
- Be mindful of the risk of exacerbating existing discrimination in communities through community engagement approaches.
- Advocate with governments to take into consideration the priority issues identified in communities. When appropriate, share data with local governments, within the constraints of ‘Do No Harm’.
- Partner with community leaders and local networks to identify risk mitigation strategies to support the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

STANDARD 9

managing activities



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Managing activities involves community participatory approaches that focus on reaching agreement on activities, resources required, roles and responsibilities, and establishing a timeline for implementation. It encompasses providing capacity, training, and the execution of planned activities in collaboration with communities. It is also associated with the mobilization of networks, communications, systems, and feedback mechanisms identified through informed design and participatory planning efforts.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

9.1 Action plans are developed with communities that inform priorities and activities, monitoring, and the measurement of impacts and outcomes.

- Use participatory processes to reach agreement on activities, core problems and issues, resources required, roles and responsibilities and project timelines.
- Develop action plans with communities to establish priority activities. Ensure action plans are agreed to and have approval from an inclusive range of leaders.
- Create responsive mechanisms to address situations in which community priorities are not aligned with previously planned goals.

9.2 Communities are partners in the identification of community leaders, mobilizers and facilitators.

- Identify individuals, groups and leaders that will facilitate, lead, engage and monitor community engagement initiatives.
- Establish a clear and transparent mechanism for selecting any community leaders, mobilizers, representatives and community entities (such as groups), and ensure that this selection mechanism is based on assessments.
- Develop and support the capacity of local community entities to carry out their roles. Have clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, including the development of policies and procedures.
- Advocate with community leaders for gender mainstreaming, and for the inclusion of vulnerable or under-represented community members for leadership and implementation roles.

9.3 The role of mobilizers and frontline workers in undertaking community engagement is prioritized and adequately supported.

- Ensure that trusted and community-identified community mobilizers or their equivalent act as frontline workers in the engagement process.
- Recruit mobilizers who represent a cross-section of community sub-groups, including linguistic, class, gender, and age-based categories.
- Train mobilizers. Ensure that they receive ongoing support and guidance and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Align financial or in-kind incentives to government policies. Ensure that these are consistent and reliable.

STANDARD 10

monitoring, evaluation and learning



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes involve communities in designing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, identifying indicators, and undertaking data collection, analysis, and validation of findings. The data collected during monitoring and evaluation belong to local and communities first and foremost, as well as national and local governments.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

10.1 Monitoring, evaluation and learning plans contain comprehensive, but non-burdensome, data collection needs, requirements and capacities.

- Develop monitoring and evaluation strategies in partnership with local staff and communities.
- Involve communities, mobilizers, staff and any other relevant stakeholders in data collection, analysis and validation.
- Design indicators with local communities, when possible. If not, validate indicators to ensure that they are applicable in local contexts.
- Integrate real-time feedback mechanisms into monitoring systems.
- Use data to determine if ‘do no harm’ approaches, including risk analysis and risk mitigation, were successfully integrated in community engagement practices.
- Establish internal rules to address privacy and ethics issues. Ensure that policy is aligned with national government policy on data collection.
- Train and supervise people involved in evaluation and monitoring.

10.2 Data collected during community engagement are shared with communities.

- Explore ways for communities to analyse MEL information and use the information to inform decision-making and self-management.
- Review the monitoring systems being used to ensure they are fit for purpose, collecting quality data, and using data to inform changes over time.
- Share the findings of evaluations with communities, organizations, governments, donors and other stakeholders.

PART C

STANDARDS SUPPORTING COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION

The standards contained in Part C are focused on the enabling environment for community engagement and efforts to better harmonize community engagement initiatives.

STANDARD 11

government leadership



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Implementing agencies recognize that national governments have the primary responsibility to respect, fulfill and protect the rights of the population. Governments can facilitate processes through which community engagement efforts are coordinated and integrated with relevant government agencies, and work in a manner that is consistent with national policies and strategies. Government should develop policy and advance mechanisms for coordinating community engagement activities.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

11.1 Community engagement is advocated for and prioritized. Policies, processes and minimum standards that prioritize community engagement are adopted.

- Advocate for the development of national strategies (whether standalone or within strategies such as health and WASH), standard operating practices or community engagement norms and standards at national level.
- Advocate with governments to prioritize community engagement planning and resources during project design, especially in programmes in which community engagement is seen as secondary to the direct provision of services or other inputs.
- Provide support to agencies, units or sections located within national governments dedicated to health education and promotion, social mobilization or behaviour change communication. This includes any units with the capacity to coordinate and support community engagement initiatives.
- Develop tools and policies to pre-position risk-sensitive programming approaches (risk mitigation) to ensure that community engagement approaches align with the ‘do no harm’ principle.

11.2 Community engagement approaches are aligned with the policies and strategies of national, regional and local government.

- Work closely with government and relevant ministries through the project cycle, including consideration of whether the community engagement initiatives are aligned to national and regional strategies.
- Ensure that community engagement initiatives align with and 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.
- 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 policymaking and back to communities.

11.3 Governments are supported to budget for, coordinate and monitor community engagement programmes and activities.

- Engage national, regional and local-level authorities in the design, implementation and monitoring of community engagement programmes. Government and partners develop and share technical capacity.
- Support national and local governments in adequately budgeting for community engagement and supporting capacities.
- Support governments with coordination and integration through participation in any national community engagement platforms or inter-agency mechanisms.
- Share community engagement analyses and findings with relevant government agencies in a format that is risk-informed, appropriate and relevant.

STANDARD 12

partner coordination



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Partners using community engagement approaches should coordinate their activities with other response partners and coordination structures. In the absence of government policy or strategy specifically guiding engagement with communities, work to ensure intra-agency coordination to increase quality, accountability, harmonization and optimization. Partners should take appropriate steps to conduct risk analysis and risk mitigation to ensure that coordination efforts do not compromise the safety of, or lead to discrimination against, or targeting of, vulnerable populations by government or other actors.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

- 12.1 Implementing agencies participate in and contribute to mechanisms that facilitate community engagement coordination.**
- Map and share areas of activity to avoid duplication of programming and geographic location, with a focus on avoiding the overburdening of community (i.e. ‘group fatigue’).
 - Meet regularly through an inter-agency mechanism focused on community engagement at the subnational level.
- 12.2 Implementing agencies share, or have mechanisms and policies in place to facilitate the sharing of, community engagement knowledge, skills and resources.**
- Maintain the capacity and mechanisms for sharing community engagement data, when ethical, in compliance with government policy, and in support of improving quality and harmonization.
 - Use nationally and internationally designed tools and guidelines for implementing community engagement.
 - Share innovations and adaptations of community engagement approaches.
 - Establish a common platform for sharing and analysing data to strengthen decision-making, transparency and accountability.
 - Limit duplication of staff, effort and planning in order to moderate demand on community resources.
- 12.3 The prioritization of community engagement and the voice of communities are collectively advocated for by implementing partners.**
- Advocate for the importance of community engagement at all stages of the project cycle, across sectors and across contexts.
 - Use inter-agency platforms to amplify community voices to decision-makers and funders of development and humanitarian initiatives.

STANDARD 13

integration



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Community engagement should be integrated and harmonized within the development and humanitarian architecture in any given context. At programmatic level, community engagement should be mainstreamed across all sectors to ensure participation and to improve effectiveness.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

- 13.1 Across all sectors, community engagement is mainstreamed in programming.**
- Integrate community engagement into design, funding and implementation for all initiatives across all sectors.
 - Define how community engagement is factored into project organizational structures, multilevel systems (national, subnational, community), data collection and analysis processes, and two-way communication mechanisms.
- 13.2 Community engagement is combined with other approaches and channels of communication.**
- Ensure that community engagement is undertaken in association with, and reinforced by, a range of approaches that includes targeted risk communication, behaviour change communication, social mobilization and advocacy.
 - Use multimodal community engagement channels to support other communications activities. This includes interpersonal communication (community level, face-to-face, household level, etc.), mass media, digital platforms and social media.
- 13.3 Community engagement approaches are recognized as a primary cross-sectoral function across humanitarian response pillars.**
- Incorporate community engagement as an essential element within all pillars and coordination bodies, recognizing that community engagement or social mobilization is not a standalone activity or cluster. Position community engagement in each cluster during emergencies, and ensure it is an integral part of cross-sectoral coordination.
 - Align community engagement to health and humanitarian protocols to ensure service provision is appropriate and effective.

PART D

STANDARDS SUPPORTING RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Resource mobilization refers to the management and administrative functions that support community engagement activities and systems. Human resources, logistics, procurement, budgets, and safety and security protocols are necessary to ensure successful community engagement practice. These capacities are also needed to achieve community engagement at scale and maintain sustainable capacity.

STANDARD 14

human resources and organizational structures

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Clear and consistent management and supervisory systems, and staffing, recruitment, supervision, training and capacity development programmes should be in place to support community engagement programming.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

14.1 Adequate staffing and management structures exist to implement community engagement activities.

- Recognize that community engagement requires a high level of technical expertise.
- Adequately plan and allocate human resources for planned activities. Seek to align recruitment to the needs of the positions (consider language, literacy, gender, ethnicity, etc.).
- Develop policies and processes to provide ongoing training and supervision to staff and volunteers to ensure quality community engagement practice.
- Design clear organizational structures with clear roles, responsibilities, delegation of authority, and reporting systems around community engagement.

14.2 Human resource policies and processes protect and support staff, volunteers and communities.

- Draft and approve codes of conduct, standard operating procedures, and safety and security policies.
- Develop plans to provide insurance, indemnification, and compensation to staff and volunteers injured or sickened during community engagement work.

14.3 Sufficient expertise exists for all aspects of implementing community engagement initiatives.

- Recruit, train and support staff with the relevant skills, experience and capabilities. Provide relevant and clear job descriptions to ensure alignment with programming needs. Whenever possible, give preference to local residents.
- Ensure that volunteers are competent and professional, selected in conjunction with communities, and receive adequate training and ongoing support.

- Defer to community engagement experts in the design and management of community engagement activities. Sector-specific programming should ensure that resources are dedicated to the meaningful participation of community engagement experts.
- Mainstream community engagement within training for frontline functionaries across sectors. Identify skills gaps and design refresher training; ensure that supervision, mentoring and coaching is provided to frontline functionaries.

14.4 Capacity development for community engagement approaches is mainstreamed for all staff, partners and volunteers.

- Implementing agencies develop and utilize structured community engagement curricula for staff and volunteers, which focus on essential tools for effective community engagement (for example interpersonal skills, participatory approaches, listening, facilitation, inclusion, organizational skills, monitoring, etc.).
- Provide ongoing training and supervision to staff and volunteers to support high-quality community engagement practice. Institute capacity-building as an ongoing process, that allows for regular refresher training based on programmatic or contextual changes. Training and supervision should be based on evaluation of staff and volunteers.
- Raise awareness about community engagement and its application among all engagement staff (e.g. sector-specific technical experts; staff working in logistics, accounts and administration.)

STANDARD 15

data management



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARD

Qualitative and quantitative data, historical and contextual information, geospatial information, contact details, background literature, and other descriptive details require appropriate, ethical and secure data stewardship. Data management involves the development of data protocols. This can include data management plans, plans for data collection and transfer, plans for data storage, data protection, ethical guidelines, confidentiality plans, clear assignment of data ownership and custodianship, and plans for analysis, storage, and – when necessary – destruction of data.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

15.1 The management of community engagement data is addressed through a data management plan.

- Develop a data management plan that considers all aspects of data management, including security, sharing, ownership, necessity, sensitivity, data collection, data storage, data access, and long-term plans for the preservation or destruction of data.

15.2 Data management protocols address anticipated and unanticipated uses of data, data security issues, and data ownership issues.

- Design and implement plans for data storage, data protection and data destruction. Modify plans as needed in partnership with other key stakeholders to determine optimal use of data, and data security.
- Ensure that there is a clear chain of data ownership. Assign data ownership and custodianship roles. Know exactly where communities fit into the chain of data ownership, and have plans to revert data and analyses back to communities.
- Design rules for the transfer of data using online and real-time communications. This may include dedicated passwords for online data transfer, and secure storage areas in physical facilities.
- Adhere to national and international ethical guidelines, including protocols for anonymity and confidentiality.
- Develop data sharing agreements with partners. Determine acceptable conditions for data sharing.

15.3 Use digital technologies to improve data collection and analysis.

- Recognize and seek to mitigate the risks associated with digital technologies (software security vulnerabilities, GIS-enabled respondent identification).
- Identify platforms commonly used by governments and partners in order to ensure cross-platform compatibility, and greater data access and use.
- Plan for the long-term storage and maintenance of digital data. If possible, and when consistent with your data management plan, partner with other institutions to archive data for long-term use.

STANDARD 16

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 achieve targets, including all personnel, coordination and operational costs.

QUALITY CRITERIA & ACTIONS

16.1 Community engagement activities are adequately budgeted and resourced.

- Identify the real costs of community engagement activities. Allocate needed resources for labour, materials, transportation and supplemental resources.
- Develop a practical estimate of the time demands, labour-time requirements, and timeframes for community engagement activities. This should be realistic, and closely aligned with local contexts and conditions.
- Anticipate the real costs of quality community engagement staff and volunteers, including training, supervision, reporting, management and salaries/incentives.
- Ensure that payments for labour and reimbursements are made in a timely fashion.
- Make resources available for essential partner coordination, information sharing, collaborative interventions, and optimization of community engagement programming. This may involve flexibility in the scheduling and mobilization of labour, transportation and logistical resources.
- Ensure sufficient resources to support attendance and participation in sectoral, pillar, cluster, department, inter-agency and governmental meetings. This includes collaborative activities like information sharing and liaising with regional and local actors.
- Integrate community engagement and accountability budgeting into programmatic planning and design across all sectors.



4

Community Engagement Indicators: Background and Guidelines for Use

Community engagement indicators are ways of measuring the effectiveness of the community engagement. Consistent and rigorous measurement of community engagement enables us to demonstrate the value of community engagement to key stakeholders. To date, there has been a lack of clarity and agreement around the methods, indicators and strategies required to measure the effectiveness, impact and results of community engagement. This has had a negative impact on the mobilization and scaling of community engagement activities, and on advocacy, resource prioritization, and the systems-wide integration of community engagement in national policies, development initiatives and humanitarian response.

Community engagement indicators are important for the community engagement process. Indicators are needed to measure performance for each standard. Measurement, in turn, improves the quality of community engagement, supports communities and providers in achieving community goals, and provides stakeholders with measurable benchmarks of process and outcomes in order to enable intra-programme accountability and cross-programme comparisons.

An extensive review of the literature on community engagement, and a review of 1,000+ community engagement, community capacity, social mobilization and community empowerment indicators currently in use suggests that there are no 'gold standard' indicators for community engagement. In this section, we offer two sets of suggested indicators for community engagement that are aligned to the minimum standards presented in the previous section.

This section is intended to identify potential indicators by providing suggestions and examples based on current practices. It suggests newly developed indicators for standards for which there is no measurement precedent. But due to wide variations in use, audiences, contexts, and applications, these indicators are intended as guidance, or reference points, for localized, specific and targeted evaluations of community engagement.

They have been designed for adaptation by:

- National and local governments
- NGOs, CSOs and implementing agencies.

The first set of indicators focuses on **national and local governments** (Table 3). Indicators for government reflect the primary role of government in setting policy, coordination and integration of community engagement actors and ensuring that community engagement approaches are aligned to established national and international policies. The intended application of these indicators is for governments, and the organizations that support them, to be able to monitor community engagement activities and ensure that adequate attention is being paid to all standards that contribute to an enabling environment.

These indicators are designed to support governments in adopting a leadership role in community engagement processes in their countries. They are applicable to high-, middle-, and low-income countries. These indicators have been partly shaped by intensive efforts in recent years to improve national and local preparedness, response and resilience to epidemics, emergencies, disasters and climate change. They have also been influenced by global experience gained in promoting community systems strengthening, health systems strengthening, accountability to affected populations, and public transparency. They can support the establishment of a baseline for government institutional capacities, roles, and leadership, and require investments in long-term capacity-building and systems strengthening.

The second set of indicators are targeted towards **not-for-profit and community service sectors** (Table 4). NGOs and CSOs are frequent users of community engagement indicators and have extensive experience in using indicators to analyse targeted programmatic priorities. The suggested indicators are designed to be used to adapt existing indicators and reporting standards so they meet the minimum quality standards for community engagement.

USING THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

The indicators below align with the definitions, standards and actions presented in the *Minimum Quality Standards for Community Engagement*. This can help to ensure project harmonization, results-based management, and the development of an evidence base for applied community engagement. It can also support accountability to local populations, governments and donors.

These indicators are meant to trigger internal institutional review processes to study whether internal data collection, monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning tools and processes align with the community engagement minimum standards.

Table 3 and Table 4 are each divided into the four sections of standards that have been presented above: Core Standards, Implementation, Coordination and Integration, and Resource Mobilization. This constitutes one approach to segmenting benchmarks and indicators. It should be adapted to all measurement frameworks for community engagement research, monitoring, evaluation and learning, as this approach will lead to a more holistic assessment of community engagement capacity, functioning, integration, and resource sufficiency.

Table 3 and Table 4 are subsequently divided into 16 rows aligned with each of the 16 minimum standards. In each of these rows, a selected sample of suggested indicators for the standard have been presented. We recommend choosing at least one indicator per standard for community engagement measurement, or developing an indicator for each standard that is better suited to institution- and context-specific goals and objectives (see next section).

To score indicators, we have developed a Likert Scale that prioritizes progress towards achieving an ‘enabling environment’ for successful community engagement practice. Unless otherwise indicated by the content of the indicator, we recommend using the scale in Figure 3, which ranges in value from 5 to 1. This scale prioritizes achievement of an indicator, with attention to commitment, financial resources and operational capacities. The comprehensive achievement of the standard should be context-specific. The objective of the numeric scale is to provide broad process and goal achievement benchmarks for evaluating how well community engagement practice aligns with the *Minimum Quality Standards on Community Engagement*.

FIGURE 3. LIKERT SCALE RESPONSES FOR INDICATOR REPORTING

5	There has been considerable achievement, with the commitment and capacities to sustain efforts at all levels.
4	There has been substantial achievement, but with some recognized deficiencies in commitment, financial resources or operational capacities.
3	There is some institutional commitment and capacities to achieving the goal, but progress is not comprehensive or substantial.
2	Achievements have been made but are incomplete, and while improvements are planned, the commitment and capacities are limited.
1	Achievements are minor and there are few signs of planning or forward action to improve the situation.

Organizations can be selective in which indicators they select, how they choose to apply the scoring system, and how many benchmarks and indicators to apply. Core to the suggested approach is ensuring each standard is measured, and that measurement reflects progress towards creating an enabling environment for community engagement action. For example, approaches might include: i) selecting one indicator per standard for measurement; ii) selecting multiple indicators per standard and consolidating to one Likert Scale score; iii) scoring multiple indicators per standard depending on the context and which standards are being emphasized (for example, emphasis on participation and planning for development initiatives, and coordination and implementation for humanitarian response).

Due to the need for localization and adaptation, and a current lack of quality evidence on community engagement, these indicators are not designed for universal adoption, and there are no current expectations for mandatory reporting. Institutions have their own needs and requirements and can use these indicators as a starting-point for launching organization-specific initiatives to design monitoring and evaluation processes, measurement approaches and methodologies that are fit for purpose and context-specific. The widespread adoption of these standards, with a more consistent approach to measurement, will result in an expanded ability to set global indicators for community engagement in future versions of this document.

DEVELOPING LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDICATORS

When possible, community engagement indicators should be co-developed with affected populations as part of a wider strategy of participatory evaluation. Localized indicators should use both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative approaches that prioritize community entry, community-based research, earning, and relationship-building, and analysis of community-based leadership and capacities, in particular, are recognized as essential to both the process of community engagement and the process of community engagement measurement.

Annex 3 offers a flexible design approach to the development of indicators by presenting an indicator matrix that cross-sections the core standards against the standards in sections B, C, and D. We do not recommend that users populate each ‘box’ in this matrix. Instead, users should use the matrix as a tool to think adaptively about how to develop local indicators in ways that ensure that each of the core standards are applied to implementation, coordination and integration, and resource mobilization decisions, processes and outcomes.

The localized design of community engagement measurement frameworks should ensure that there is at least one benchmark or indicator aligned to each community engagement standard. Indicators should be developed or adapted to local contexts. They should be fit for purpose and directed towards the needs of the implementation actors, governments, local communities and other stakeholders. Consultations with inter-agency partners, practitioners and government representatives have identified universal priorities for community engagement indicators:

1.

Indicators should be adaptable and it should be possible to localize them, in order to capture the reality 'on the ground'.
2.

Indicators should be valid and reliable.
3.

Indicators should be based on data that have been collected ethically and securely.
4.

Indicators should be sensitive to differences in gender, age, language, culture, and risk and vulnerability.
5.

Indicators should be simple, feasible, and adaptable for low-resource contexts.
6.

Indicators should include process measures and outcome measures.
7.

Indicators should include both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
8.

Indicators should align with national development policies.
9.

Indicators should be designed to measure community engagement capacity at all levels: local/ community, national, international, organizational/institutional.

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Community engagement data can raise issues around privacy, vulnerability, and risk due to sensitive information shared by individuals and communities. With new data collection technologies, more data is associated with geospatial information that allows for the precise identification of data sources. It can also include important information that can contribute to long-term and cross-context learning and quality improvement. These considerations should be taken prior to data collection, through a deliberate consideration of data-related privacy and vulnerability issues. Users of the standards have an obligation under the principle of 'Do No Harm' to ensure that proper data collection and data management practices are implemented to protect vulnerable individuals and populations.

The collection and analysis of community engagement data is a central platform of these standards. To date, there is a lack of standards and guidelines for integrating the principle of 'do no harm' into community engagement data management. We recommend using the resource 'A Human Rights Based Approach to Data: leaving no one behind in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which specifically prioritizes the following six principles: Participation, Disaggregation, Self-identification, Transparency, Privacy and Accountability.²⁷ These principles align with the core principles presented in these standards and should be prioritized in community engagement measurement activities.

NATIONAL, SUBNATIONAL, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDICATORS

TABLE 3. SUGGESTED INDICATORS FOR NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART A: CORE STANDARDS	Standard 1. Participation	A.1.1 Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities. A.1.2 The country has a mechanism for participation of children and youth at the local and/or subnational and/or national level to influence development agendas that affect the most disadvantaged and marginalized.
	Standard 2. Empowerment & Ownership	A.2.1 Governments have established reporting mechanisms for identifying if work with existing community groups and institutions is locally supported. A.2.2 Government has established reporting mechanisms for receiving complaints regarding ownership and mandates for community engagement activities or related programmes.
	Standard 3. Inclusion	A.3.1 Proportion of government ministries with community engagement department/team/working groups that have mechanisms to reach out to affected or at-risk populations at national, provincial, district and/or local levels. A.3.2 Capacity of individual government ministries/departments to conduct vulnerability mapping exercises for introduction of new policies/directives/programmes. A.3.3 Government has strong and diverse representation from disadvantaged/marginalized/excluded groups (gender, disability, ethnicity, SES status, urban/rural).
	Standard 4. Two-way Communication	A.4.1 There exists/has been adopted a national strategy, standards, or policy for two-way communication with local/community leaders. A.4.2 A two-way information and knowledge exchange system has been established to communicate local strategies to officials, and to provide local communities with information, resources, etc. A.4.3 Government provides feedback to local populations on how their inputs have been incorporated into policies, plans and processes. A.4.4 Government provides information, or provides support to external actors involved in communications, to ensure that information is accessible, simple and in language-appropriate formats to inform decision-making.
	Standard 5. Adaptability and Localization	A.5.1 All subnational and local government offices have indicated support and approval for a national community engagement strategy. A.5.2 All subnational and local government offices have implemented national community engagement strategies.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART A	Standard 6. Building on local capacity	A.6.1 Data are collected and analysed to identify the existing skills and resources of communities and local groups.
PART B: IMPLEMENTATION	Standard 7. Informed Design	B.7.1 Local government offices have the capacity to collect and distribute local partner mapping reports and public government data to organizations conducting informed design activities. B.7.2 Local and national government offices are able to budget for necessary resources to implement community engagement activities with communities and implementing partners.
	Standard 8. Planning and Preparation	B.8.1 Local government staff are tasked with representing the government in participatory planning and preparation activities. B.8.2 Community representatives are engaged in government planning and preparation activities.
	Standard 9. Managing Activities	B.9.1 Local or national government offices schedule, receive, and analyse implementation updates on community engagement activities. B.9.2 Local and regional government officials have established structures to solicit NGO and CSO community engagement activity approval, and provide leadership to support goals and outcomes.
	Standard 10. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning	B.10.1 Proportion of priority government ministries that have developed community engagement benchmarks.
PART C: COORDINATION & INTEGRATION	Standard 11. Government leadership	C.11.1 There is a national strategy, standards, or policy for including local communities in stakeholder discussions on policies. C.11.2 At a national level, there is operational guidance on the roles of community engagement for implementing partners.
	Standard 12. Partner Coordination	C.12.1 There is a platform, focal person, team or working group for community engagement at the national level. C.12.2 Local government has adequate training and authority to mediate conflicts between local communities and NGOs and CSOs.
	Standard 13. Integration	C.13.1 Integration of community engagement in national plans (education, WASH, child protection, emergency). C.13.2 Community engagement standards are included in government-issued RFPs and job descriptions with a community engagement component.
	Standard 13. Integration	C.13.3 In emergencies, SOPs are developed to provide guidance for community engagement across all pillars. C.13.4 The country has regular/formal/institutionalized mechanisms for public engagement with strong linkages to decision-making and planning processes.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART D: RESOURCE MOBILIZATION	Standard 14. Human resources and organizational structure	D.14.1 Governments have issued policies or standards to address labour practices specific to the community engagement workforce. Examples would include security, pay scale/incentives, and schedules.
	Standard 15. Data Management	D.15.1 National government routinely collects baseline social data and analysis (such as mapping of languages, living conditions, religious/cultural practices/trusted channels of communication, influencers). D.15.2 National government routinely uses analysis of baseline social data to inform policies, initiatives and practices.
	Standard 16. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting	D.16.1 Ministries have oversight over disbursement by implementing agencies in order to ensure adequate, appropriate and timely budgeting. D.16.2 Resources are realistically allocated for community engagement actions in accordance with the core minimum standards, as applied to Sections B, C, and D. D.16.3 Strong efforts are being made by government actors to ensure the appropriate human and financial resources are allocated to facilitate participatory and child/adolescent-friendly processes. D.16.4 Public engagement mechanisms are well funded.

NGO, CSO, AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCY INDICATORS

TABLE 4. SUGGESTED INDICATORS FOR NGOS, CSOS AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART A: CORE STANDARDS	Standard 1. Participation	A.1.1 Community goals for participation are identified and achieved. A.1.2 Community members are aware of mechanisms for participation. A.1.3 Community members are given an opportunity to identify barriers to participation. A.1.4 Community members have positive experiences of participation. A.1.5 NGOs, CSOs and partners identify and use strategies to sustain or increase participation. A.1.6 Community members identify the needs and priorities of various groups and sub-groups in the community.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART A: CORE STANDARDS	Standard 2. Empowerment & Ownership	A.2.1 Issues identified are among the top priorities of communities for community action. A.2.2 Communities demonstrate an ability to explore key issues, develop action plans, carry out action plans and evaluate results. A.2.3 Community members believe that community engagement contributed to increasing voice, decision-making, and authority. A.2.4 Community members feel that they ‘own’ the project; that it is ‘for them’. A.2.5 Community members support and are invested in a plan for long-term sustainability. A.2.6 There is an increase in perceived and demonstrated community capacity by the end of the project.
	Standard 3. Inclusion	A.3.1 A full range of stakeholders, including women, children, people with disabilities, linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities, and vulnerable populations are identified and facilitated to contribute during the informed design and participatory planning processes. A.3.2 Strategies have been developed and implemented to ensure as wide a range of inclusive representation as possible (e.g. gender, youth and children, minority groups, linguistic groups, vulnerable populations). A.3.3 Marginalized group members hold decision-making roles, leadership roles and mobilization roles. A.3.4 Groups affected by the prioritized issue have been involved in leadership and mobilization activities.
	Standard 4. Two-way Communication	A.4.1 Community leaders had direct access to government and NGO/CSO leaders in prioritizing community engagement goals. A.4.2 Two-way communication mechanisms have been used to reach community members. A.4.3 There has been an increase in knowledge about the issue among community members. A.4.4 Communications between local communities, governments and stakeholders have increased in quality and frequency. A.4.5 Communication between key stakeholders has been sustained throughout the entirety of the community engagement initiative. A.4.6 CE platforms have facilitated two-way communication and feedback for decision-making and action by local stakeholders (including young people).
	Standard 5. Adaptability and Localization	A.5.1 Communities are able to influence and guide project priorities and actions. A.5.2 Community support is assessed before initiating projects or activities. A.5.3 Contextual analysis of the community informed both the proposal and budget for the project.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART A: CORE STANDARDS	Standard 5. Adaptability and Localization	A.5.4 Qualitative materials and participatory practices have been integrated into all aspects of implementation. A.5.5 Community concerns, beliefs, and structures have been prioritized as a key input throughout the project cycle. A.5.6 Contextual analyses involve ‘experience-near’ research and evaluation contributions (e.g. the use of qualitative data or case studies). A.5.7 Course corrections have been made when community members and leaders indicated issues with activities and strategies. A.5.8 CE platforms/processes have been adapted to address specifics of local contexts, programmatic areas and special requirements of stakeholders (including young people).
	Standard 6. Building on local capacity	A.6.1 The resources and capacities of local populations have been identified and maximized in designing and implementing activities. A.6.2 Local capacities (including formal institutions, formal structures and informal social networks, informal social networks, and individual skills) have been integrated into project planning, management and evaluation using routine strategies and practices. A.6.3 Existing community capacities have been used to collect and analyse data. A.6.4 CE initiatives prioritized community capacity-building towards development of local solutions and empowerment.
PART B: IMPLEMENTATION	Standard 7. Informed Design	B.7.1 Contextual analysis (e.g. situation analysis, risk analysis and gender analysis) and qualitative research (e.g. networks, social processes, and local contexts) has informed programme planning. B.7.2 Communities have influenced project plans. B.7.3 Government policies or mandates have been identified and aligned, and government permissions have been obtained. B.7.4 Community engagement programmes have been aligned to national government priorities.
	Standard 8. Planning and Preparation	B.8.1 A participatory assessment has been conducted, and results shared with communities. B.8.2 Transparency and accountability have been established with communities through the development of a written community action plan co-developed with community stakeholders.
	Standard 9. Managing Activities	B.9.1 A community action plan has detailed community interests, defined the roles and responsibilities of programmes, community actors, and local governments, timeframe for implementation, and progress benchmarks. B.9.2 Community engagement activities have been implemented as planned.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART B: IMPLEMENTATION	Standard 9. Managing Activities	B.9.3 Milestones from the strategic community plan have been monitored and achieved. B.9.4 Community mobilizers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. B.9.5 Community mobilizers have access to regular training and responsive supervision. B.9.6 Project outcomes are consistent with community expectations at the outset of the project.
	Standard 10. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning	B.10.1 Qualitative and quantitative indicators for community engagement have been co-developed with local communities. B.10.2 Predefined indicators have been locally validated to ensure that they aligned with community priorities. B.10.3 Data collection activities were transparent, non-burdensome, and perceived as beneficial by community members. B.10.4 Community members were involved in monitoring progress towards goals. B.10.5 Evaluations have been disseminated within organizations, to governments, to local communities and to partners.
PART C: COORDINATION & INTEGRATION	Standard 11. Government leadership	C.11.1 A continuous process of risk analysis and risk mitigation is used to assess if government involvement creates or worsens safety, discrimination, disadvantage or vulnerability for local communities or community sub-groups. C.11.2 Local and regional government officials demonstrate commitment and support for NGO and CSO community engagement activities, and provide leadership to support goals and outcomes. C.11.2 Community engagement activities are aligned with local government community engagement strategies. C.11.3 Community engagement programmes are aligned to national government priorities. C.11.4 Local government has adequate training and authority to mediate conflicts between local communities and NGOs and CSOs. C.11.5 Government approvals were sought and obtained at national and local offices prior to initiating work.
	Standard 12. Partner Coordination	C.12.1 Partners participate with inter-agency forums and networks in the coordination of community engagement actions. C.12.2 Identification of NGO, CSO, and community organization partners has been inclusive and represents the social, cultural, gender, age and religious distribution of the communities. C.12.3 Community engagement data are shared with local partners in accordance with relevant government policy.

	MIN. STANDARD	INDICATOR
PART C: COORDINATION & INTEGRATION	Standard 12. Partner Coordination	C.12.4 Partners share community engagement resources around programmes and activities that share common goals. C.12.5 Community members can clearly identify partners, and know how to address with questions, conflicts, or accountability issues.
	Standard 13. Integration	C.13.1 All sections of the organization recognize that community engagement is a cross-cutting activity with relevance for other sectors. C.13.2 Support is provided to all units to integrate community engagement into activities. C.13.3 Sectors integrate demands for community engagement capacities to optimize community time, labour, and participation. C.13.4 Internal organizational processes are in place to resolve conflicts and competition between other sectors and community engagement capacities, to facilitate integration.
PART D: RESOURCE MOBILIZATION	Standard 14. Human resources and organizational structure	D.14.1 Human resources and policies are in place that also include support to community mobilizers. D.14.2 Staff and volunteer labour is adequate for the scope of the project. D.14.3 Staffing reflects the composition of the community (language, gender, age, place of origin). D.14.4 Staffing takes into account the need to ensure risk mitigation in programme implementation.
	Standard 15. Data Management	D.15.1 A data management plan has been devised and agreed to by all stakeholders. D.15.2 Ongoing data analysis was used to inform and make changes to programming. D.15.3 Community members systematically collect community data. D.15.4 Data were shared with the community for comment, feedback and action planning. D.15.5 Data materials or copies (hard copy or digital) are handed over to local stakeholders.
	Standard 16. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting	D.16.1 Financial and non-financial support to staff and mobilizers (supervision, training, logistics) is sufficient to ensure that community engagement can be carried out as required. D.16.2 Payment for incentives and other reimbursement is in line with relevant policies and made in a timely manner. D.16.3 Resources are made available for coordination of community engagement activities with partners and government. D.16.4 Sufficient time was allocated to achieve the goals of the project.



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Annex

ANNEX 1

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT CYCLE CHECKLIST

This checklist is a tool for community engagement planning. It prompts consideration of community engagement components through all stages of the project cycle and supports the creation of an enabling environment for community engagement programming and practice.

A. CORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS

STANDARD 1

participation



- Were communities consulted, or did they 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 and interactive participation throughout the engagement process?

STANDARD 2

empowerment & ownership



Are plans in place that consider:

- Ensuring community members and their leadership are involved in the planning processes and supported in decision-making around managing and monitoring activities?
- Determining whether communities already have plans of action in place to address the key issues?
- Providing communities with opportunities to identify and contribute resources and skills to planned activities?
- Giving communities and community leaders 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 among those previously without a voice in decision-making?
- Support to community leaders that wish to apply for and receive funding for ongoing activities?

STANDARD 3

inclusion



- Have processes been developed for identifying under-represented, disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized groups in communities?
- Has research been undertaken to identify the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to participation for disadvantaged and marginalized groups?
- Has advocacy been undertaken within communities for the inclusion of marginalized groups?
- Is there diverse representation and participation in the participation in activities, leadership roles, participatory planning, implementation, and evaluation processes?
- Were feedback pathways developed for vulnerable and under-represented groups to be included in, but distinct from, broader feedback mechanisms?

STANDARD 4

two-way communication



- Has a communication plan been developed for the project to ensure that communities receive clear information about project intentions, methods and objectives and to 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 power-holders, including government and implementing organizations?
- Is the feedback mechanism structured to facilitate comprehensive information flow that includes 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 rumours?
- Is there a process in place for communities to register complaints easily and safely and which includes transparent, timely procedures for response and remedial actions?
- Are technology and digital platforms being utilized for facilitating information flow?

STANDARD 5

adaptability and localization



- Do communities have their own plans to address their own issues? How effective are community-designed plans for addressing community-identified priorities?
- 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 taken place 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 the project, and share community concerns?

- Has work been 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?
- Were community engagement tools adapted to local contexts? Did they use participatory approaches, two-way communication, and local validation to ensure local relevance?
- Were qualitative and mixed method approaches used to develop a holistic understanding of the local context?
- Does budgetary planning anticipate local adaptation and localization?
- Did communication take place in the correct format and language and through appropriate channels? This includes interpersonal communication, community and household-level meetings, mobile phone, media, and digital/social media platforms.

STANDARD 6

building on local capacities



- Are strategies in place to ensure that community stakeholders and local implementing organizations receive 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 monitor initiatives?
- Are 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 from 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?

B. STANDARDS SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

STANDARD 7

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?

STANDARD 8

planning & participation



- 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?
- Have you identified 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?
- 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?

STANDARD 9

managing activities



- 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?
- Consider the financial and non-financial incentives you are offering community leaders and community mobilizers:
 - Are they economically sufficient to compensate for anticipated time or labour?
 - 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 programme 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? Are they compatible with other partners?

STANDARD 10

monitoring, evaluation and learning



- Have you developed indicators in partnership with local mobilizers and communities?
- Are structures in place for the regular monitoring of engagement activities?
- Were communities trained to collect and analyse 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?
- Are 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 programme exit, future sustainability, or handover of resources and project?
- Have you worked with government to consider how ministries and other departments can maintain programmes initiated by implementing partners?

C. STANDARDS SUPPORTING COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION

STANDARD 11

government leadership



- Have relevant government agencies and departments been engaged in approving and designing the community engagement initiative?
- Is the community engagement initiative aligned with government frameworks policies and strategies?
- Does the initiative build on the work of local ministries and departments?
- Is the initiative integrated with existing government initiatives?
- Are government partners supporting with technical capacity?
- Are government partners receiving the relevant training and support, where required, to actively participate in the programme?
- Have government supported the design of a monitoring and evaluation framework, and are they supporting in its implementation?
- Are staff from the programme participating in national efforts to coordinate and integrate community engagement at national or local levels (for example community engagement working groups)?
- Is the initiative sharing data with relevant government authorities?
- Is the initiative contributing to any government efforts to develop, improve or monitor community engagement?
- Is there any strategy in place to advocate for a greater community-level voice in government decision-making at local or national level?

STANDARD 12

partner coordination



- 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 behaviour change communication?
- Are there standard operating practices or community engagement norms and standards at national level? At national level, is there 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?
- 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?

STANDARD 13

integration

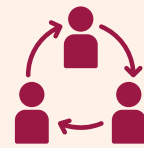


- Is community mobilization integrated as an instrumental or integrated approach that requires design, funding and prioritization for all initiatives across all sectors?
- Are activities being undertaken with and through local governments to ensure that community engagement activities are integrated with, and aligned to, local strategies and policies?
- Are there clear guidelines for describing how community engagement and communities are integrated into project organizational structures, multilevel integration (national, subnational, community), meaningful data collection and analysis processes, and feedback mechanisms.
- Are there multimodal community engagement channels to support other communications activities?
- Are implementing agencies 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?
- Is community engagement seen as an essential element within all pillars and coordination bodies?

D. STANDARDS SUPPORTING RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

STANDARD 14

human resources and organizational structures



- Are adequate human resources are allocated for the activities planned?
- Are there processes in place to recruit quality staff with the necessary 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 labour of community members being recognized and are incentives or payments proportionate to the labour 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 there dedicated community experts to act as focal points for other programmatic areas and 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 development 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?

STANDARD 15

data management



- Has a data management plan been developed that considers all aspects of data management, including security, sharing, ownership, necessity, sensitivity, data collection, data storage, data access, and long-term plans for the preservation or destruction of data?
- Have plans been designed and implemented for data storage, data protection and data destruction?
- Is there a clear chain of community engagement data ownership?

- Are there rules in place for the transfer of data using online and real-time communications?
- Are national and international ethical guidelines being adhered to, including protocols for anonymity and confidentiality?
- Have data sharing agreements been drawn up with partners?
- Have platforms commonly used by governments and partners been identified in order to ensure cross-platform compatibility, and greater data access and use?

STANDARD 16

resource mobilization and budgeting



- Has adequate budget been allocated for all activities associated with undertaking community engagement activities, including personnel and their support costs as the major programme 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?
- Has community engagement and accountability been integrated into all plans and budgets?
- Does the government or ministry have budgets dedicated to, or incorporating, community engagement approaches?

ANNEX 2 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: FUNDING INSTITUTION CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed to support funding institutions in assessing the quality of community engagement activities in proposals and project design. Application of the checklist and standards should be adapted to individual organizational contexts so that it is fit for purpose.

MIN. STANDARD	QUALITY CRITERION	
Standard 1. Participation	Are processes and policies in place for collaboration, shared learning, or interactive participation throughout the engagement process?	☐
	Are established and recognized participatory methods and approaches included?	☐
	Is there is a description of how communities will be engaged?	☐
Standard 2. Empowerment & Ownership	Does the proposed programme identify and plan to work with existing community structures and strategies in order to facilitate community decision-making and ownership?	☐
	Are communities recognized as leaders in decision-making, and in determining the actions that affect the community?	☐
	Are community resource capacities (labour, time, financial and material) and limitations described and factored into project resource management?	☐
Standard 3. Inclusion	Are clear plans in place for identifying and mapping disadvantaged, discriminated against, deprived and marginalized social groups to ensure activities are accessible, appropriate and relevant to their needs?	☐
	Will the initiative measure and report on how disadvantaged and marginalized social groups are included in activities and decision-making?	☐
	Will the initiative measure and report on how disadvantaged and marginalized social groups access services?	☐
Standard 4. Two-way Communication	Are systematic two-way communication mechanisms planned or implemented between communities and all relevant stakeholders, including government and implementing organizations?	☐
	Is there a description of how communication and feedback from communities will be incorporated into implementation?	☐
Standard 5. Adaptability and Localization	Have community engagement approaches and models been adapted to the local context, or is there a plan for doing so?	☐
	Has adaptability and flexibility been prioritized in the design of the initiative (for example through flexible budgeting)?	☐
	Will communities be communicated with in linguistically and culturally appropriate formats (for example through the local staff and volunteers)?	☐
Standard 6. Building on local capacity	Is community self-sufficiency, independence, and sustainable development identified as a core objective of the community engagement approach being proposed?	☐
	Is there a plan to tailor the training and capacity-building strategy to the needs of each community, and to community members’ skills and expertise?	☐

MIN. STANDARD	QUALITY CRITERION	
Standard 7. Informed Design	Has the initiative been designed with a thorough contextual analysis of local affected communities?	☐
	Are the proposed community engagement approaches in line with government policies?	☐
	Are the proposed community engagement approaches in line with international standards for human rights, humanitarian response, and international development practice?	☐
	Is the project designed to accommodate community engagement dynamics and community inputs?	☐
Standard 8. Planning and Preparation	Has partner identification been conducted or planned in order to ensure local self-determination, ownership and prioritization?	☐
	Have community assessments and mapping exercises been undertaken or planned?	☐
	Has a risk analysis assessment been conducted or planned, and will it result in risk mitigation steps?	☐
Standard 9. Managing Activities	Will action plans be developed with communities to inform priorities and activities, monitoring, and the measurement of impacts and outcomes?	☐
	Will communities act as partners in the identification of community leaders, mobilizers and facilitators?	☐
	Are mobilizers and frontline workers prioritized and adequately supported (for example through capacity development and budget allocations) for community engagement activities?	☐
Standard 10. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning	Do monitoring, evaluation and learning plans contain comprehensive, but non-burdensome, data collection needs, requirements, and capacities?	☐
	Will the data collected during community engagement be shared with communities?	☐
Standard 11. Government Leadership	Is there a government advocacy strategy in place for ensuring community priorities are shared with government partners?	☐
	Are community engagement approaches demonstrably aligned with the policies and strategies of national, regional and local government?	☐
Standard 12. Partner Coordination	Does this project include activities and budget for participation in and contributions to coordination mechanisms?	☐
	Are mechanisms and/or policies in place to facilitate the sharing of community engagement knowledge, skills and resources?	☐
Standard 13. Integration	Is community engagement mainstreamed across all aspects of the project, including across sectors?	☐
	Is community engagement linked to other approaches and channels of communication in project design?	☐
	In the case of humanitarian response, are plans in place for integration across pillars, clusters, or other coordination mechanisms?	☐
Standard 14. Human Resources and Organizational Structures	Are planned timelines realistic?	☐
	Are staffing and management structures described?	☐
	Are these sufficient to implement community engagement activities?	☐

MIN. STANDARD	QUALITY CRITERION	
Standard 14. Human Resources and Organizational Structures	Are human resource policies and processes in place to protect and support staff, volunteers and communities?	☐
	Is there adequate reporting and supervision structured into CE activities?	☐
Standard 15. Data Management	Is there a data management plan?	☐
	Do data management protocols address data usage, data sharing, data security issues and data ownership issues?	☐
	Will digital technologies be used to improve data collection and analysis?	☐
	Has a risk analysis been conducted for data collection, analysis and sharing?	☐
Standard 16. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting	Are community engagement activities adequately budgeted for and resourced?	☐
	Is there adequate flexibility in project funding to enable responsiveness to communities and their feedback?	☐
	Does the budget include adequate financial support for all planned activities?	☐

ANNEX 3

OPEN FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEASUREMENT

	PART A: Core Standards for Community Engagement						
		Standard 1. Participation	Standard 2. Empowerment and Ownership	Standard 3. Inclusion	Standard 4. Two-way Communication	Standard 5. Adaptability and Localization	Standard 6. Building on local capacity
PART B: Implementation	Standard 7. Informed Design						
	Standard 8. Planning and Preparation						
	Standard 9. Managing Activities						
	Standard 10. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning						
PART C: Coordination & Integration	Standard 11. Government Leadership						
	Standard 12. Partner coordination						
	Standard 13. Integration						
PART D: Resource Mobilization & Budgeting	Standard 14. Human Resources and Organizational Structures						
	Standard 14. Data Management						
	Standard 14. Resource Mobilization and Budgeting						



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