

Foundation module 6

Community mobilisation

Section 4 Community-based approaches with specific groups and settings

Exercise 3



Community mobilisation for refugee women

Purpose

By the end of this exercise, participants will be able to:

- identify issues involved in the community mobilisation of refugee women
- devise possible strategies to achieve this
- explain some of the implications for male leadership structures.

Timeframe

45 minutes **Part 1**

20 minutes **Part 2**

20 minutes plenary

Resources

- enough copies of **Section 4, Handout 2** Scenario, and **Handout 3** What actually happened
- flipchart paper and pens

Method

Part 1

- 1 Divide the participants into groups and give them **Handout 2**.

Ask them to consider the issues involved in the fictional scenario and to:

- consider what issues need to be taken into account in planning a strategy for facilitating the mobilising of women
- devise a coherent strategy for mobilising women
- decide what steps should now be taken to pursue this strategy.





Although based on an actual situation, the facts have been changed in order to:

- provoke discussion of the community mobilisation of refugee women
- reflect on appropriate and inappropriate approaches to implementing such initiatives.

Part 2

- 2 Give the groups **Handout 3**, which describes what actually happened, and ask them to re-examine their proposed strategies.

In the light of this, ask them to list the key principles involved in the community mobilisation of refugee women on flipchart paper.

- 3 In plenary, ask each group to present their lists.

Points to include in the plenary

- The changed situation of these people (ie. becoming refugees) creates a new range of problems and also calls for a range of responses which may go beyond traditional coping strategies and social structures.
- It is vital to understand traditional social structures, eg. the role of women and the pattern of social organisation in the country of origin. In setting up a security guardians team in this example there should have been a better understanding of the precise role of women, eg. in the police force.
- The initial approach was a rather reactive one, there was no real strategy for facilitating the social organisation of women.
- The threat which women posed to the male leaders should have been anticipated and a strategy which avoided unhelpful confrontation should have been devised for dealing with this issue. In this case, women found it easier to consider issues within their own group before bringing them to the male leaders.
- Acceptance by established leaders of the more organised involvement of women's needs should be paced appropriately, with time taken to establish their tasks, build up trust and to avoid men feeling threatened to the extent that they effectively block women's involvement.
- A key issue is deciding whether to try to integrate women into existing, male-dominated social structures, or whether, on a short- or long-term basis it may be preferable to initiate separate and parallel structures for women. In this example, separate structures eventually led to a degree of integration which might not be possible in some cultures.
- Establishing social structures to deal with particularly sensitive issues (eg. sexual abuse or peace and reconciliation) requires time and a high level of trust.
- Policies on the payment of incentives to refugee leaders should be sensitive to gender issues.
- Awareness raising concerning gender issues and the importance of the mobilisation of women may need to be a continuous process within UNHCR, NGOs and amongst refugees.

