

Annex 3

Community focus group discussion tool



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These resources have been created as part of the [Community Voices for Better Protection \(CVBP\)](#) project. This project aims to understand the risks associated with information in humanitarian contexts from the perspective of humanitarian field workers, specialist protection agencies and media and other information providers. Using field work conducted in 2022-23 in three locations – Iraq, Mali and Philippines – these resources work to address a gap in the understanding of, and response to risk and information.

For feedback or suggestions for the improvement of these guidelines, please contact the Internews Humanitarian Team through info@internews.org

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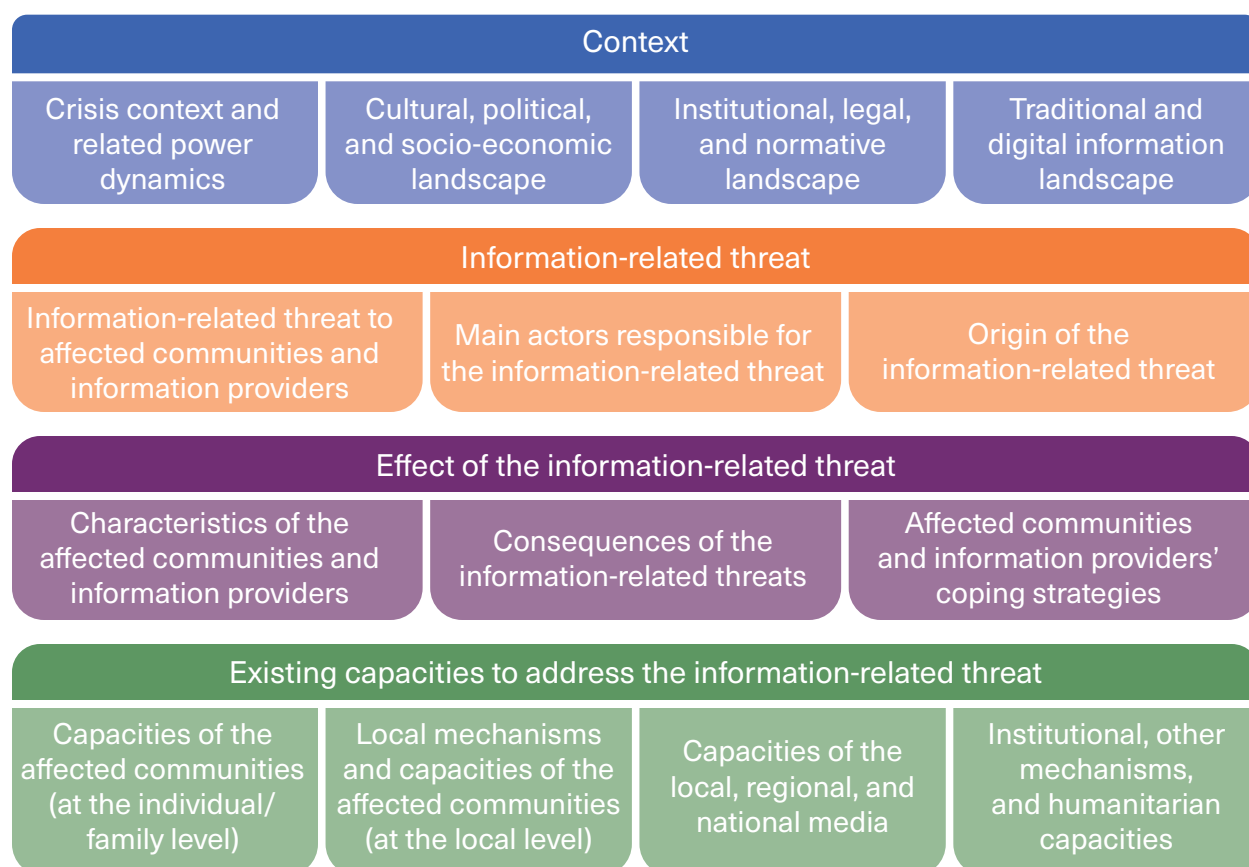


Annex 3: Community focus group discussion tool

Purpose of this tool

This focus group discussion tool can serve as a guide to local information actors aiming to better understand information-related protection risks. The questions provided in this tool are not context-specific and should be adapted to the context and language(s) ahead of community consultations. This focus group discussion tool is designed to help you obtain information on the four pillars of the information protection analytical framework – outlined in Module 3: Reducing information-related protection risks: an analytical framework. Each section of the tool covers one topic that can be used independently of the others, however, make sure that all the data you need for your analysis is covered if you integrate only one section of this template to your specifically designed tools. Do not hesitate to adapt to your needs, keeping in mind the balance with a reasonable discussion length. For guidance on facilitating focus group discussion (FGD), see UNHCR tool for participatory assessment in operations “Facilitating discussions”. Sampling should be representative of the population and take into account power dynamics.

PAF THE INFORMATION PROTECTION ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



Introductory Exercises

To help the facilitator in framing the discussions around information needs and risks (as opposed to other humanitarian needs and protection risks), an introductory exercise is recommended at the beginning of each section (see each section below for more details). Those exercises should be adapted to the literacy (including information and digital literacy) level of the affected communities, as well as to their access to different channels of information.

Focus Group Discussion Guidance

A. Topic I: Denial of access to information

Reminder: denial of access to information is established when the freedom to create, share, seek, and obtain information is purposely “impaired in such a manner and to such a degree that it hinders the capacity of the affected communities to enjoy basic rights and fulfil their basic needs”¹. Humanitarian actors have the responsibility to provide safe and meaningful pathways that allow the affected communities to seek and obtain information on humanitarian services, and to create and share feedback and complaints about those services. For more information, refer back to Module 3, Section 2.

Setting up the introductory exercise:

Use a flipchart prepared prior to the FGD. Each participant gets three pieces of paper/ stones to vote for their most important topic in question 1. Once the participants have voted, use the three topics that received the most vote to frame the rest of the discussion topics. Participants might request for an additional topic to be added in context where access to information is restricted – you are encouraged to discuss it, just be mindful of the time. **Remember that the goal is to frame the discussion around safe and meaningful access to information.**

What topic do you need more information about but have difficulties accessing?

¹ Global Protection Cluster: Protection risks' definitions: “Disinformation and Denial of Access to information”

	Information need category	Total
1	Cash assistance	
2	Basic needs (food, clothing, hygiene)	
3	Legal documentation	
4	Livelihood opportunities	
5	Childcare and education	
6	Education and vocational training for adults	
7	Healthcare and medicine	
8	Mental health and psychosocial support	
9	Support for person with special needs (disabilities)	
10	Housing, land and property rights	
11	Politics	
12	Return to place of origin for IDPs	
13	Security	
14	How to give feedback and report needs to humanitarian organizations and camp management?	
15	Gender based violence	
16	Other:	

Guiding Questions

Topic 1 part 1: Information needs of the affected communities and barriers to safely and meaningfully access information.

- What information do you need about this topic?
- Why has it been hard to get information on this topic? (language, access to source or channel of information, no information available on this topic, difficulty in verifying accuracy of information, fear of seeking information on that topic)
- Do you think there is information you are purposely deprived of? (what information, why, who is responsible?)
- Are there any topics you feel are essential, but you feel you can't discuss for certain reasons?
- What are the consequences of this situation?



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- “humanitarian context” and “traditional and digital media landscape” sub-pillar of the “context” pillar
- all sub-pillars of the “current information-related threat to the affected communities” pillar
- all sub-pillars of the “effect of the information-related threat on the affected communities and information actors” pillar.

Topic 1 part 2: Community-based solutions to increase access to information.

- What type of communication do you prefer to use to access and share information (face-to-face, radio, TV, telephone, online information)? And why?
- Do you have strategies to access information if your usual methods are not available? Do you feel those strategies are positive or negative – do you have to take risks to get information on that topic?
- What could be done to improve access to information on this topic? Who do you think would be the best place to change the situation? (individual, community, community leaders, local authorities, media, government, humanitarian actors, etcetera)

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- “affected communities’ coping strategies” sub-pillar of the “effect of the information-related threat on the affected communities and information actors” pillar
- all sections of the “existing capacities to address the information-related threat” pillar
- + Questions in this section will also guide local media and humanitarian actors on how to design projects and adapt their communication work to comply with the affected communities’ recommendations.

Topic 1 part 3: Feedback and complaint mechanisms.

- Do you know how to report needs, feedback, or problems/complaints to humanitarian organizations or camp management?
- Have you ever reported to humanitarian organizations or the government?
 - ▶ If yes, what did you report and where you happy with the outcome?
 - ▶ If not, why did you not report (I don't know how to report, I am afraid to report, I don't think reporting will make a difference, etc)?



- “affected communities’ coping strategies” sub-pillar of the “effect of the information-related threat on the affected communities and information actors” pillar
- all pillars of the “existing capacities to address the information-related threat” pillar.
- + Questions in this section will also support humanitarian actors to evaluate the existing feedback and complaint mechanisms and provide information on the communities’ preferences to strengthen those mechanisms.

Note for facilitator: if this topic is done independently of the other two, you may need to add a few questions from Topic 3 - Information literacy, digital literacy, and practices, to collect data on vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population.

B. Topic 2: Disinformation, misinformation and rumors

Reminder: disinformation is defined as the intentional dissemination of false information to cause harm, it “misleads the population and, as a side effect, interferes with the public’s right to know and the right of individuals to seek, receive, and impart information” . The community perspective on whether there is a deliberate intent to provide them with false information is not enough to determine disinformation. The burden of proof to establish disinformation requires additional elements. Misinformation and rumors should be considered in order to understand when false information is inadvertently shared, and when rumors exist due to barriers to verify information. For more information, refer back to Module 3, Section 2.



Setting up the introductory exercise:

Use a flipchart prepared prior to the FGD. Each participants gets three pieces of paper/ stones to vote for their most accessible and trusted source of information. Once the participants have voted, use the three sources that received the most vote to frame the discussion. Participants might request for an additional source to be added in context where access to information is restricted – just be mindful of the time. *Remember, social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, etc.) are not a source – who posted the information on the social media platform (directly created or shared an information created by another source)? This exercise is an opportunity to touch on the concept of sources and channels with the participants prior start of the discussion. Remember that the goal is to frame the discussion around access to accurate information.*

Who do you trust the most to give you information about sensitive topics?

	Categories of information provider	Total
1	Family and friends	
2	Neighbors and other members of the community	
3	Religious leader	
4	Community camp leader	
5	Community Leaders (Women leaders, Youth leaders)	
6	Traditional leader	
7	Local media	
8	National media	
9	International media	
10	Local Government	
11	Regional Government	
12	National Government (ministries, etc.)	
13	Camp management	
14	Local organization	
15	National organization	
16	International organization	
17	Other:	

Guiding Questions

Topic 2 part 1: Information preferences of the affected communities and barriers to access accurate information.

- Why did you choose those sources? (trust, language, proximity, authority figure, safely accessible, etcetera.)³ Are there topics that you would not trust them for?
- Do you have access to enough sources of information? And do those sources of information use channels and platforms of communications that you find safe and easily accessible?
- Have you come across any information about important topics that you thought might not be true?
 - ▶ What was the information? Who was the source? What was the platform? What do you think are the consequences of such unverified or false information circulating in your community?
 - ▶ Do you think this false information was deliberately shared to cause harm, or mistakenly shared by someone that was not aware the information was false?

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- all sub-pillars of the “current information-related threat to the affected communities” pillar
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3 Refer to Internews' Trust Analytical Framework (also in Module 1) for more information on how to frame the components of trust in a measurable way

Topic 2 part 2: Community-based solutions to increase access to accurate information.

- What do you do when you receive information from a source you do not totally trust?
- How do you verify information? What is the process?
- What do you do when you cannot verify information?
- What could be done to improve access to accurate information? Who do you think would be best placed to change the situation? (individual, community, community leaders, local authorities, media, government, humanitarian actors, etcetera)

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- “affected communities’ coping strategies” sub-pillar of the “effect of the information-related threat on the affected communities and information actors” pillar
- all sections of the “existing capacities to address the information-related threat” pillar

Note for facilitator: if this topic is done independently of the other two, you may need to add a few questions from Topic 3 - Information literacy, digital literacy, and practices, to collect data on vulnerabilities and capacities of the affected population.

C. Topic 3: Information literacy, digital literacy, and practices

Reminder: humanitarian crises are likely to impact access to information and force individuals to take unknown or calculated risks to create, share, seek, and obtain information. Information literacy and digital literacy should always be analyzed alongside the actual practices of the affected communities.

Setting up the introductory exercise:

Ask the participants to raise their hands every time they want to respond “yes” to your affirmations. This exercise should not be used to evaluate the literacy skills of the participants or collect quantitative data. It solely aims to start a discussion that analyzes whether the affected community have the information and digital literacy required to safely access information (whether it is creating, sharing, seeking, or obtaining information), and if the humanitarian context forces individuals to take calculated risks to access information.

Remember, the goal is to frame the discussion around information literacy, digital literacy, and actual information practices.

See below for subtopics you can use to lead the discussion. We recommend selecting 5-6 to get the conversation going, based on the focus of your engagement with a particular group and the context (for example, if your group does not have access to the internet you can take out conversation starters about digital)

Affirmations on information literacy, digital literacy, and practices of the participants

- All the news that can be found online are true
- Only experts can provide information on the radio so all information on this channel is true
- My family and friends would never lie to me so I can trust all the information they share with me
- I like to debate about information
- I always verify information prior sharing it with others
- I use my own name on social media
- I share my location in real time on social media
- I accept friend request from strangers on social media
- I accept friend request from famous persons on social media
- I use a real picture of me for my profile picture on social media
- There is information I would never share or ask in public
- There is information I would never share or ask on the phone
- There is information I would never share or ask online (or on the radio in locations with no connectivity)

Guiding Questions

Topic 3 part 1: Assess information literacy, digital literacy and impact of the humanitarian crises on the capacity of affected population to safely access information.

- In day-to-day life, are there topics that you fear speaking of in public? What about over the phone? What information do you think is sensitive but is worth taking a risk for? (creating, sharing, seeking, obtaining).
- If you were participating in a radio show, is there personal information that you would prefer not to share? Why? What about information that you share online?
- When using group chat in messaging apps, do you usually know all the people in the group? Does it affect how much you share information and participate to the discussions, and how much you trust the information being shared on the group?
- Have you witness/heard of people who were harassed/bullied after posting or sharing information online? Who in the communities is more likely to face problems on social media and why? If you or one of your friends were targeted on social media, do you know how to report it (online and offline)? Who could help you?

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Guiding Questions

Topic 3 part 2: Community-based solutions to build information literacy and digital literacy, and reduce use of negative coping mechanisms.

- Are there safe spaces where the community can meet to access and debate about information (create, share, seek, and obtain information)?
- What could be done to increase information literacy and digital literacy? Who do you think would be best placed to change the situation? (individual, community, community leaders, local authorities, media, government, humanitarian actors, etcetera)
- What could be done to reduce the need to take risks to obtain information? Who do you think would be best placed to change the situation? (individual, community, community leaders, local authorities, media, government, humanitarian actors, etcetera)

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- “affected communities’ coping strategies” sub-pillar of the “effect of the information-related threat on the affected communities and information actors” pillar
- all sections of the “existing capacities to address the information-related threat” pillar
- + Questions in this section will also guide local media and humanitarian actors on how to design projects and adapt their communication work to comply with the affected communities’ recommendations.

Once you’ve completed the FGD and other planned data collection, you’re ready to analyze the information you received. *Module 3: Reducing information-related protection risks: an analytical framework* provides guidance on how to analyze information and form recommendations to increase safe and meaningful access to information. *Module 2: How can I contribute to a safer information ecosystem by adapting my ways of working?* will help local information actors to use this analysis to adapt their ways of working on information and communicating with communities, including developing community-based feedback and complaint mechanisms.

Guidelines map: How do I use the *Information and risks: a protection approach to information ecosystems* modules and annexes?

