

Establishing Refugees Committees for the urban community through community centres

Adopting the participatory approach in all its programmes, UNHCR advocates and encourages for establishing refugees committees which are seen as tool to ensure refugees' right in participation. In order to be able to outreach a large number of refugees, design activities based on the needs and ensure safe environment for community centre's staff and refugees, refugees committees should be established.

UNHCR is pleased to work closely with its implementing partners to support them in establishing refugees' committees in the community centres. This note aims at providing a general guideline on how to establish committees in the urban setting, propose roles for the committee's members, and suggest a code of conduct.

Proposed steps to establish refugees committees in the urban areas:

1. Announce that the centre is planning to establish a refugee committee and run an election for it. In the announcement, explain the procedures (i.e candidates who meet the criteria can apply to run for the election), include the generic TOR/ roles and most importantly explain that this will be on voluntary basis and elected representatives will **not** be financially compensated. Proposed generic TORs/roles and criteria will follow.
2. The announcement in Arabic to be displayed inside the centre (in the activities' rooms, announcement board and on the gate).
3. Set a deadline for those who are interested to run for elections (possibly two to three weeks from the day of announcement).
4. After receiving a list of candidates, create another announcement where the names of eligible candidates are listed and the date and time for the election are set¹. The announcement could be displayed in the activities' rooms, announcement board, etc.
5. On the Election Day, one or two staff members of the centre together with UNHCR – if needed- will be supervising the voting process. At the end of election day, the votes will be checked in a transparent manner in front of the candidates.
6. Announce the names of the elected committees and display their roles and the content of the code of conduct for other refugees to see.
7. A training to be organised for the committee on communication skills, their roles, code of conduct, etc. UNHCR can provide this training if requested.

Proposed roles of committees' members:

The following are suggested roles which should be further elaborated and discussed with the elected committee members. In general, the committee will act as liaison between the refugee community and the community centre:

1. Support the community centre staff to disseminate information to the refugee community (Information could be related to the activities of the centre, some brochures published by the centre, Turkish authorities, and/or other UN agencies and NGOs on available services provided to Syrian refugees)
2. Represent the refugees' community and communicate the main issues which refugees may face to help partners and UNHCR better design their interventions and programmes.

¹ Eligible candidate those who meet the criteria

3. Support the community centre staff when organising events.
4. Act as mediators in case of tensions and support community centre staff in dealing with any misunderstanding.

Proposed criteria:

1. He/she is above 18 years old;
2. He/she is keen to be involved in community based activities;
3. He/she is willing to represent the community on voluntarily basis;
4. He/she is an active person.

The committee should be represented equally by men and women. In case women express their concerns in working with male members, it is encouraged to create a separate committee for women.

Proposed Code of Conduct (CoC):

The elected committees' members will sign CoC and be trained on it as well. The Code of Conduct will include the following points:

- I will be committed to represent refugees equally and without any discrimination based on their beliefs, political views, gender and social backgrounds.
- I will respect the confidentiality of the people whom I will represent and of any information shared during the meetings
- I will not discuss or attempt to get/pass any personal gains by being part of the committee
- I will not accept any compensation from any party on my voluntary representation
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