



## PRACTICAL SHEET

# 4 TOOLS TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES REMOTELY

DO YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH COMMUNITIES AND INVOLVE THEM REMOTELY (ESPECIALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19)? HERE ARE SOME GOOD PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN IDENTIFYING THEIR NEEDS AND FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PROBLEMS.



## COMMUNITY RADIO

### WHY?

- Radio helps reach a wide audience by broadcasting essential information that **can save lives**.
- It is also a **forum for discussion** for feedback on the actions of UNHCR and its partners.
- Radio communication can be done through **short spots** to share brief information.
- Longer radio broadcasts (1 to 2 hours) with **call-in sessions** can also be used to have more in-depth exchanges, and to gather feedback and concerns from communities.

### ADVISABLE

- **Conduct a study on the most suitable schedules and content.** In order to allow for the participation of all (women, men, boys and girls), radio programmes must take into account gender roles and be broadcast at times when different groups are available.
- **Take into account the difficulties of accessing radio devices** because not all households have radios. Although some "basic" phones have FM receivers, they are not necessarily accessible to all members of a community.
- **Provide options to record content** (podcast) and share it securely (via Bluetooth, for example).



## TELEPHONE HOTLINE

### WHY?

- A telephone helpline facilitates **two-way communication** with the community.
- Very useful if you are not in regular contact with the persons concerned, such as in dense urban areas or **in remote areas**.

### ADVISABLE

- A helpline can be **expensive to set up**. Find out more from UNHCR country offices and UNHCR partners.
- **Raise awareness among communities** upstream on the hotline: what is it used for? what are the limits?
- **Train the staff and/or volunteers** who will be in charge of answering calls



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### SMS (TEXT MESSAGES)

#### WHY?

- SMS is an accessible tool that makes it possible to reach a **wide audience** in large territories. Text messages can be sent in **different languages**
- SMS allows you to receive feedback from the community or **conduct surveys**
- Messages are saved on the phone and recipients **can show or send** them to other people
- SMS uses **very little bandwidth**, so it is suitable for areas where the mobile network is not of good quality

#### ADVISABLE

- Some groups **can be left out** (such as refugee women who do not have access to mobile phones, blind people, those who cannot read...)
- Make **an assessment of the information and communication needs** of the communities, to know if the SMS is one of the channels they use (or would like to use)
- The use of SMS **requires a budget** and/or agreements with local telephone operators



### ONLINE PLATFORMS

#### WHY?

- Online communication platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) make it possible **to reach a wide audience faster** than traditional awareness-raising methods.
- Social media is a good tool for **two-way communication** with communities (group discussions, exchanges...)
- It allows you to send text, images, audio and video files, maps and documents
- UNHCR shares country-specific information on the [Help.UNHCR.org](https://www.unhcr.org/help) website

#### ADVISABLE

- **Build trust:** provide accurate and clear information to foster engagement in affected communities
- Find out more about **data protection and privacy**. Do not share information that could help identify individuals
- Take into consideration the **limited access to the internet and technology** by certain groups (such as women, the elderly, and children). Complement with other community engagement tools