



Aawaz Aagahi Centre Handbook

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Abbreviations

AAC	Aawaz Aagahi Centre
ACA	Aawaz Change Agent
CCAP	Collective Community Action Plan
CF	Community Facilitator
ERM	Early Response Mechanism
EWS	Early Warning System
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IEC	Information, Education & Communication
PWD	Person with Disability
RP	Resource Person
V/NF	Village/ Neighbourhood Forum

Aawaz Aagahi Centres (AACs)

Programme Introduction

Aawaz II works with local communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces to promote the rights of marginalised and vulnerable groups, to strengthen their control over their own development. Aawaz II priority vulnerable and marginalised groups include young people, women, religious minorities, transgender persons, and persons with disabilities to work towards a more inclusive, tolerant and peaceful Pakistan, with less exclusion and exploitation. The focus areas of Aawaz II include Child Marriage, Gender Based Violence (GBV), Tolerance and Social Cohesion. The programme will be implemented in 15 districts of KP and Punjab during 2023 – 2024 (Phase II). Aawaz II is a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded programme managed by the British Council.

Thematic Areas

- Child Marriage
- Gender Based Violence (GBV)
- Social Cohesion and Tolerance

Priority Groups

- Women
- Youth
- Religious Minorities
- Persons with Disabilities
- Transgender Persons

Purpose and Objectives of AACs

AACs work as the central point to engage with communities (rights holders) and enable them to establish linkages with service providers (duty-bearers) and other stakeholders by achieving the following objectives:

1. To be a safe and inclusive space for communities for dialogue and engagement on Aawaz II thematic areas with a specific focus on women and the inclusion of vulnerable groups
2. Information hubs for Aawaz II thematic areas which provide information and guidance, particularly for vulnerable groups
3. Strengthen citizen-state engagement and referrals to avail government services
4. Promote behaviour change in Aawaz II communities to reduce the acceptance of GBV, child marriage, intolerance and other harmful practices

Approach of AACs

To create a supportive environment for all social groups, it is important to facilitate sustainable positive change in individual, family and community behaviour. Aawaz II is committed to bringing about a transformative change in the lives of marginalised people, including women, youth, religious minorities, PWDs, and transgender persons. It is envisioned that changes in behaviours and community engagement will lead to achieving the empowerment of vulnerable groups by:

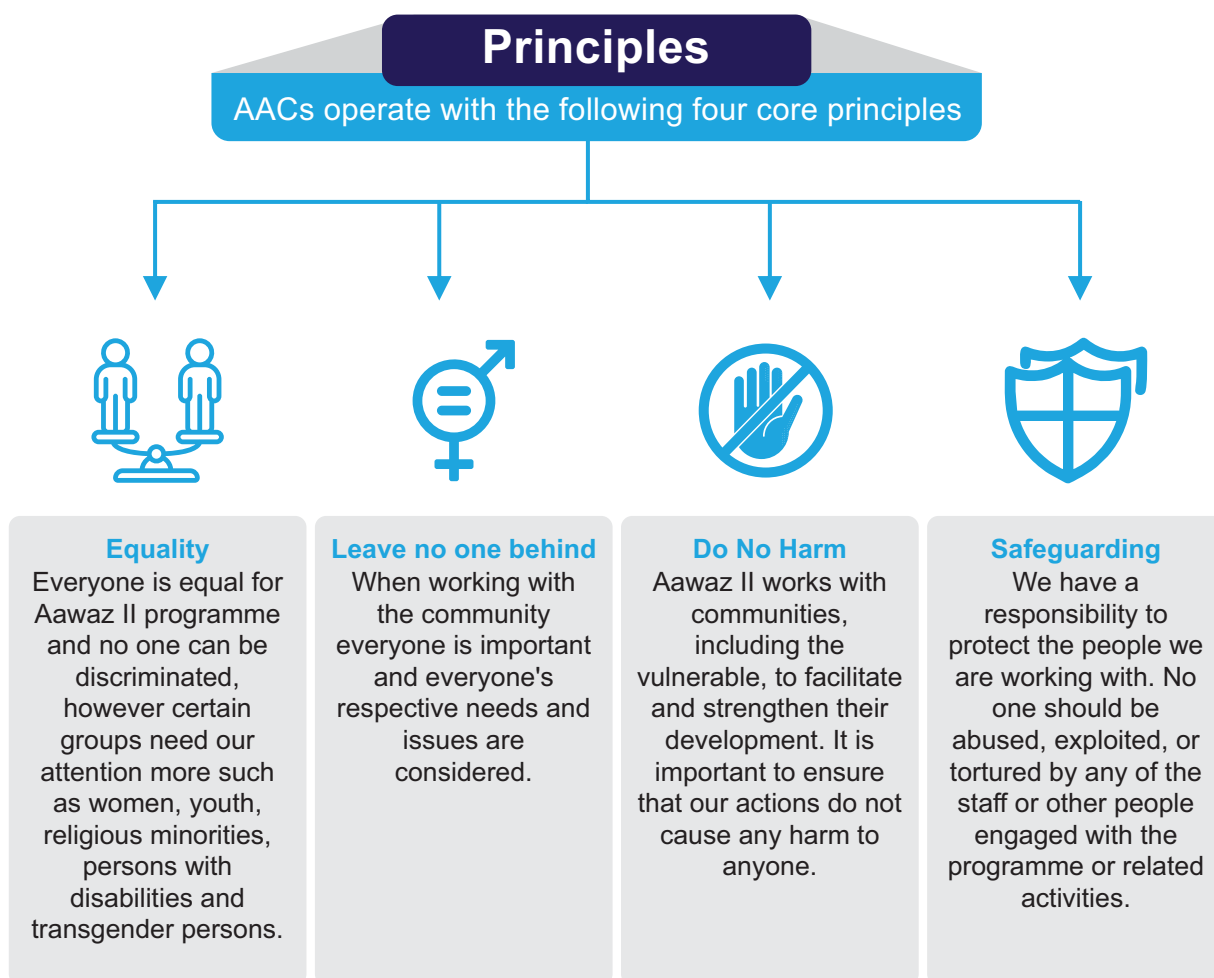
- Increasing equal and fair access to opportunities and resources by addressing different forms and patterns of discrimination that exclude the most vulnerable people
- Cultivating consciousness among individuals and communities to be aware of the social construction of inequalities towards marginalised groups
- Enabling the participation of vulnerable groups, not just as beneficiaries, but as actors leading change, engaged in decision-making
- Improving the capacity of vulnerable groups to act collectively to change patterns of inequality and exploitation arising from social intolerance and harmful practices, e.g., GBV and child marriage

The AACs follow the strategy of Aawaz II for community engagement which promotes empowerment and behaviour changes at individual, family and community levels. The overall focus of behaviour change is to decrease tolerance for discrimination and increase social cohesion, which will lead to a decrease in harmful practices like GBV, child marriage and intolerance.

Composition of the Aawaz Aagahi Centres

- i. Each AAC is responsible for two Village/ Neighbourhood Forums (V/NFs). Each V/NF consists of representatives from two to three villages
- ii. Each AAC consists of two persons i.e., Resource Persons, one male and one female who must reside in any of the villages covered by the V/NF. These RPs will perform all the functions of AAC.
- iii. Both persons will work with the support and cooperation of Village Forum and Aawaz II district partner Team.
- iv. The AAC will operate for at least 4 hours a day. The timings will be determined jointly by the V/NF and the RPs keeping in mind the convenience of the people of the area e.g. RPs can work for 4-5 hours in the morning, afternoon, or evening. People should know what normal hours are for respective AACs so they can contact RPs during those times; hence the timing cannot be changed without consultation with the V/NF and the Community Facilitator from the district Aawaz II team. The RPs will allocate 4-5 hours a day for mandatory programme work and fulfilling their responsibilities. However, it is possible that community members will reach out to RPs outside of these hours as well.

The AAC is not a physical space but is the team of Resource Persons. This is because the RPs are expected to visit the different neighbourhoods and villages that comprise the two V/NFs. The RPs or the V/NFs may be able to identify a room for the AAC office that is free of cost, as a contribution from the community. In such a case it is important to ensure that the AAC is easily accessible and a safe space for women, youth, vulnerable groups.



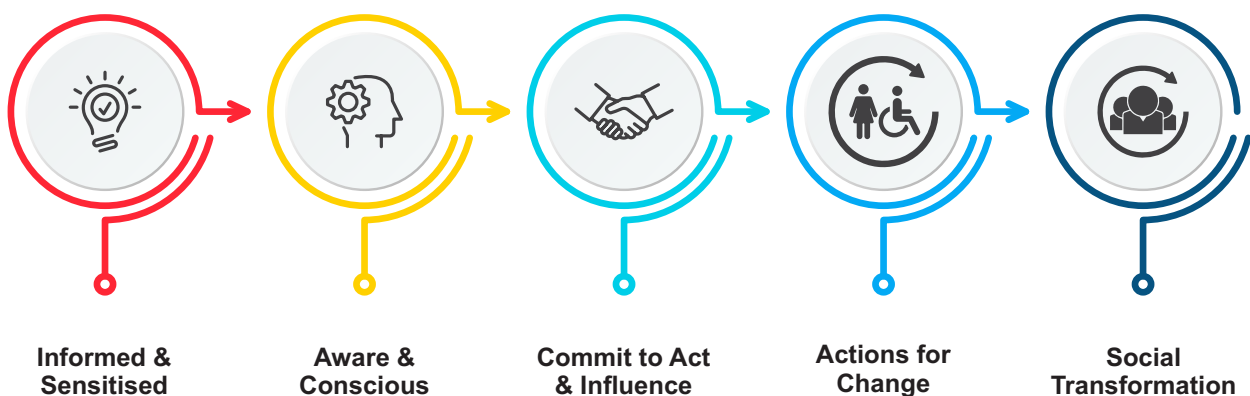
Key Points for Resource Persons (RPs)

Apart from above mentioned principles, it is important to understand and follow the above principles and comply with the code of conduct noted below.

- Punctuality is essential, especially if RPs have given an appointment to the communities in the area, it is imperative that you be there on time.
- Treat everyone equally; and with dignity and respect.
- Do not share community members' personal information and communications with anyone, other than designated Aawaz II team members or V/NF focal persons.
- Provide an environment where everyone can express their views and concerns in a safely (especially women, youth, religious minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons).
- Use local language to convey different information and ensure that the listener understands what you say.
- Written permission is required before taking a photo or video of any participants, individually or in groups, in Aawaz II interventions and communities. Permission can be provided on the Aawaz II Consent Forms by signing or thumbprinting.
- Avoid making judgements about any community members based on their words, actions or habits.
- Do not ignore the opinion of any group or person (such as women, youth, religious minorities, persons with disabilities or transgender persons). Everyone's voice and opinion is equally important to the programme.
- The power of decision rests with the community members themselves. Do not take a decision on behalf of community members without consulting them.

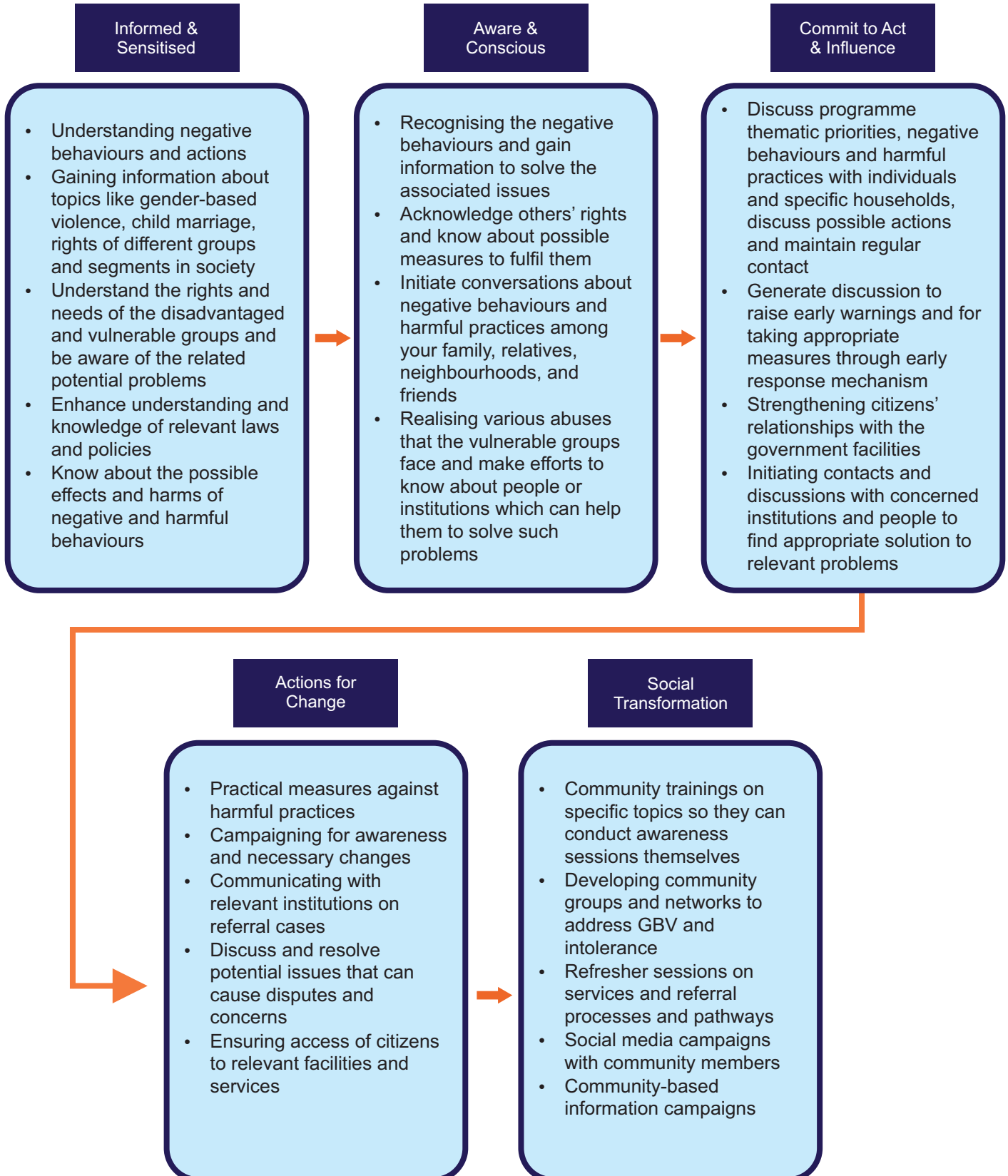
2. Behaviour Change

The overall impact or objective of Aawaz II is to bring about a positive change in individual behaviours towards Aawaz II thematic priorities (such as child marriage, gender-based violence and intolerance towards minorities), leading to community wide change. This process maps onto the communications model for change as captured in the diagram below.



The diagram below illustrates the process of behaviour change, with examples of possible actions and change as well as information or tasks required at each stage:

Possible Activities



3. Key Functions of Aawaz Aagahi Centres

This section details the functions of the Aawaz Aagahi Centres. It is important to understand that the Aawaz II programme (particularly through the role of AACs and RPs), including the below mentioned functions, is primarily aimed at bringing about a sustainable change in social norms and practices that perpetuate discriminatory, exploitative, and harmful behaviours.

a) Basic Operations of AAC

- i. AAC consists of two members (one male and one female).
- ii. AAC will develop its workplans in collaboration with the Community Facilitators. This should include facilitating V/NFs to carry out their functions, community sessions on programme thematic priorities and raising awareness of the harms of negative practices and behaviours, training sessions etc.
- iii. AAC should have regular meetings with V/NFs, which should include discussions on various functions of the programme and issues faced by the V/NFs and communities. It should discuss how various tasks can be carried out with support and help from the AAC.
- iv. AAC will conduct its community meetings and sessions etc. keeping in mind the convenience of people (specially, women, youth, religious minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons). It should involve the V/NF and conduct joint meetings wherever possible.
- v. AAC will hold its regular meetings with Community Facilitators (CFs).

b) Information Dissemination about Basic Services and Facilities

- i. Programme thematic priorities include child marriage, gender-based violence, exploitation, intolerance towards minorities etc.
- ii. Community members will report their problems to the AAC according to thematic priorities; or contact government facilities and offices through V/NFs .
- iii. Support the Village Forums to access such departments and services; and assist the Village Forums in arranging their meetings with them.
- iv. Community members who contact AAC and need information or access to services will be referred to the relevant service providers and government departments.
- v. All information about such referred persons (cases) will be kept on record.
- vi. Care will be taken to ensure the accuracy of the information, especially if the information is to be given to a government agency.
- vii. Liaise with relevant department or agencies so that referred persons (cases) are immediately assisted by them.
- viii. Remain engaged with relevant departments and services and make follow-up with concerned departments or services to ensure that referred cases are assisted and to communicate the priority and raised demands.

Referral Directory and Referrals

- Community members may not be aware of existing government facilities and services.
- A Referral Directory containing names, phone numbers, addresses, etc. of relevant facilities and departments is developed by the Aawaz II district team, to be disseminated in communities.
- AACs and V/NFs can refer communities to these facilities

- i. Keep track of types of issues (cases) that are being referred most often. All meetings and data must be recorded and made accessible only to the relevant persons.
- ix. Keep Village Forums informed about referrals and its procedures from time to time.
- x. Maintain records of communities' feedback on referrals.



c) Community Engagement

- i. Facilitate community meetings to assess community needs or problems, and priorities, either directly or through the V/NFs.
- ii. Cascade key messages and information on thematic areas to the V/NF members and provide initial support to them in holding group meetings to share the information further with the wider community.
- iii. Visit each village in the two V/NFs as per a set schedule. Hold meetings with V/NF female and male members (separately if needed), and with diverse groups in different mohalla's of the village. Make an agenda for such meetings, taking relevant IEC material for sharing and discussing.
- iv. Document stories of change from community members around child marriage, GBV and intolerance and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- v. Assess issues in community's ability to transition from awareness and knowledge to actions for change. Discuss with community facilitators to develop strategies to address these.
- vi. Organise campaigns, advocacy, and discussion groups as discussed in the next section.



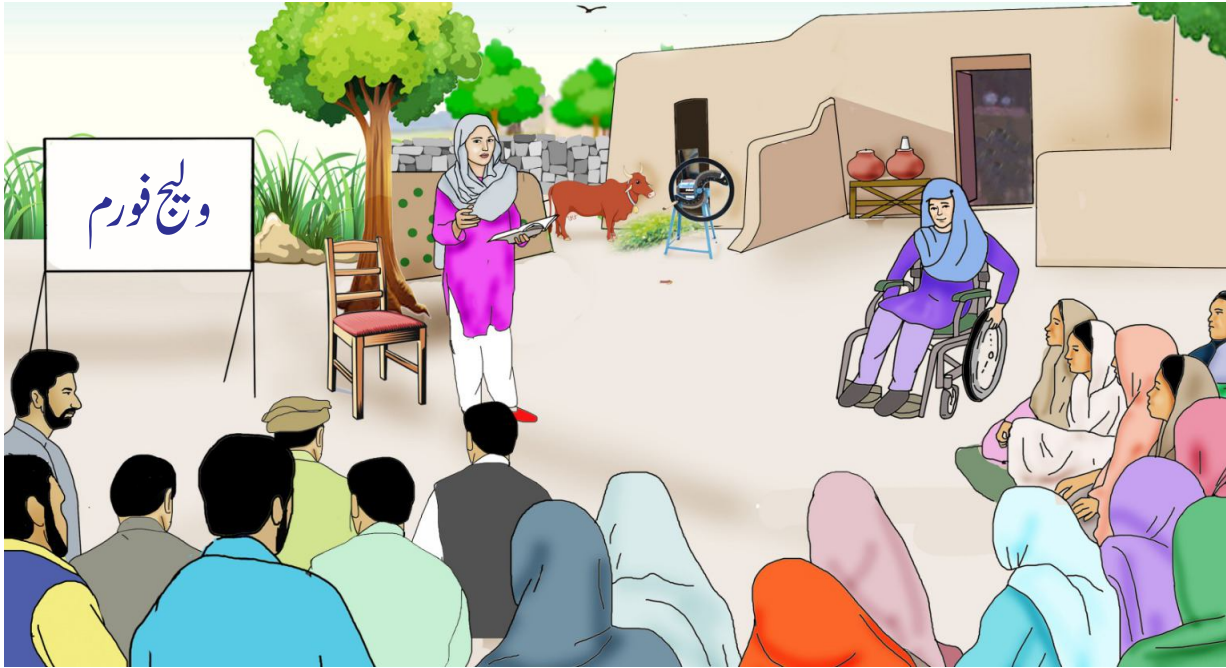
d) Behaviour Change Communication

- i. Disseminate Aawaz II programme's IEC material to the communities
- ii. Maintain a list of organisations and individuals to whom IEC material is to be distributed.
- iii. Maintain the record of IEC material distributed
- iv. Use the disseminated IEC materials to generate a discussion around the topic with community members (such as women, youth, religious minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons) and to explain the information and contents of the material to them.
- v. Engage the Village Forum members to continue the discussion on the thematic areas with the help of the IEC materials.
- vi. Display the material at public places, offices, market etc. in an appropriate manner
- vii. Be sure to take communities' feedback about the IEC and campaigns and share it with the district programme team.



e) Capacity Building

- i. Attend trainings and sessions organised on Aawaz II thematic priorities
- ii. Organise various training sessions on the thematic priorities for the V/NFs, with support of Community Facilitators.
- iii. Build linkages with the community along with the V/NFs and organise orientation and discussion sessions on thematic areas to facilitate behaviour change. Keep a record of all such sessions and ensure that they are reflected in AAC plans.



f) Social Cohesion and Tolerance

- i. Collaborate with the DSP and programme stakeholders to support the early warning and response systems to address incidents that are likely to disrupt social cohesion.
- ii. Arrange training EWS/ERM sessions with V/NFs as per Aawaz II capacity building programme
- iii. Keep a record of concerns about potentially adverse events and problems (Early Warnings) due to intolerance reported by the V/NFs
- iv. Assess the likelihood of these concerns yourself.
- v. If these concerns are valid and could lead to any disputes, try to resolve them beforehand with the support of V/NFs and Community Facilitators (CFs).
- vi. If required raise the warning to the relevant departments and officials about such possible incidents and problems so that they can be addressed quickly.

Social Cohesion and Tolerance

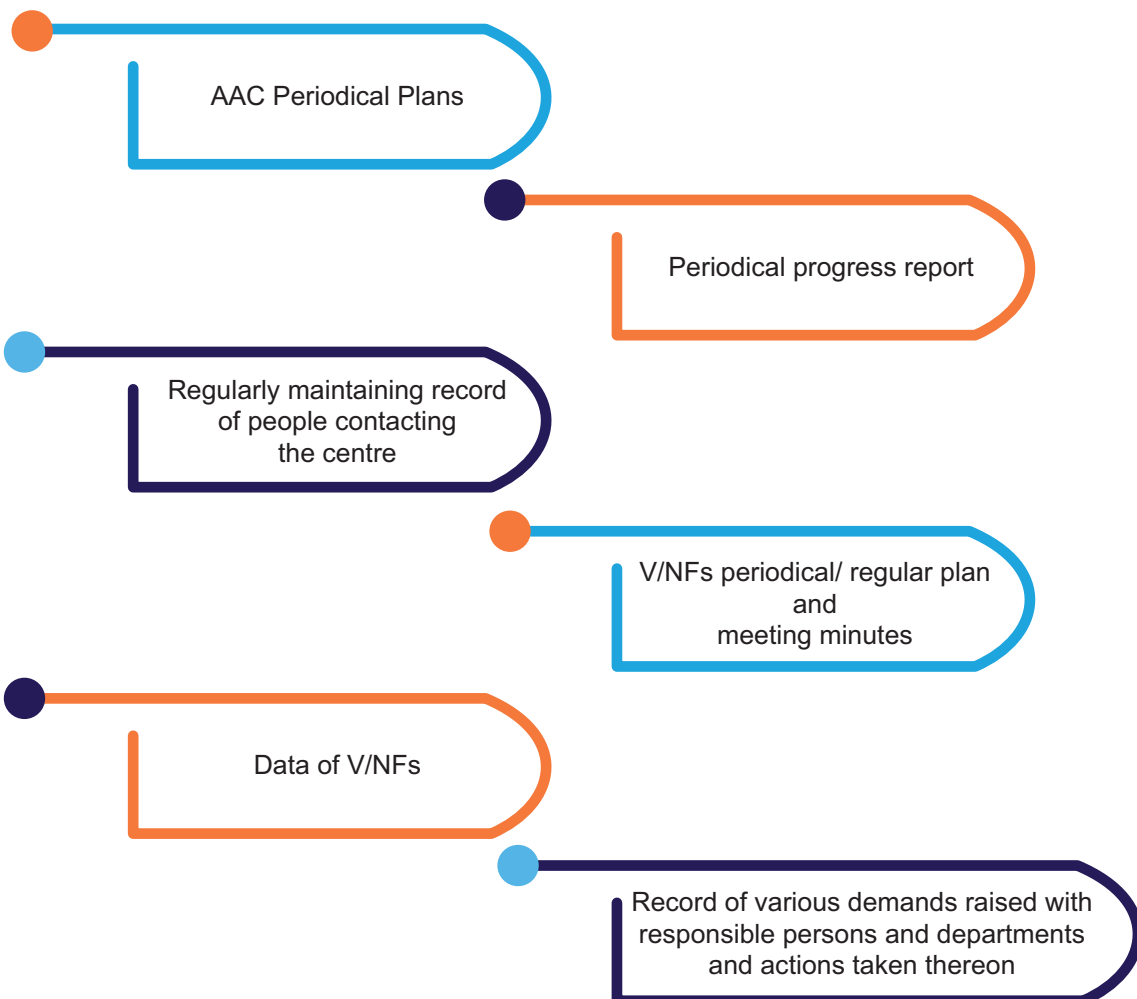
Aawaz II builds capacity to assess and proactively address potential incidents of intolerance in the community so that community and V/NFs members can identify and pre-emptively address these incidents. A system designed to anticipate these problems is an Early Warning System (EWS) and if such disputes arise, the steps taken to resolve them are the system for an early response i.e. Early Response Mechanism (ERM).

g) Data and Record Management

- i. It is important to know and understand the purposes of collecting and storing data and information and various forms used for this purpose.
- ii. All data must be collected and stored. Data collected is disaggregated by gender, age, religion, region, disability etc.
- iii. Data must be kept confidential and accessible only to specific and relevant individuals.
- iv. While saving data, basic information should be complete such as what is the relevant incident or issue, who is involved in it, since when the incident or issue occurred and when did you become aware of it, how did the incident or issue occur, and what measures were taken to address it etc.
- v. While collecting data, consider and record your observations and quality of data.
- vi. Be sure to ask the permission of the people whose information you collect by giving complete information.



h) Important Records/ Reports



4. Village/ Neighbourhood Forums

A village/ neighbourhood forum is representative of two to three villages. The V/NF is inclusive of women, youth, and vulnerable populations such as religious minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons. It ensures that their voices and opinions are included. The V/NF can facilitate behaviour change, by involving people. The Aawaz Aagahi Centre, which covers two V/NFs has an important role in facilitating the Village Forums.



The Village/ Neighbourhood Forum has the following objectives:

- To promote behaviour change through different means e.g. engage communities in dialogue, disseminate information, sensitise and raise awareness on child marriage, GBV, social cohesion, intolerance, and other harmful practices
- To facilitate diverse populations in accessing relevant mandated and non-mandated structures/services
- To engage communities in early warning and response mechanisms, both in-person and through safe digital platforms where required

Structure of Village/ Neighbourhood Forum

- i. Two Village/ Neighbourhood Forums will be managed by each Aawaz Aagahi Centre.
- ii. Each V/NF will cover 2 to 3 villages which means that an equal number of members should be represented from each of the villages.
- iii. Each V/NF will have 20-25 members above 18 years of age, of which 50% will be women.
- iv. Each V/NF will have a committee consisting of 4 members (2 women and 2 men).
 - a. Two members of this committee (one woman and one man) will be focal persons to look after the functions of the forum like conducting meetings, various programme related work etc.
 - b. Two members (one woman and one man) will be the focal points for EWS/ERM



Village/ Neighbourhood Forum Membership

There are a few important points to consider while selecting members of the V/NF, listed as under:

- i. 50% of V/ NF members should be women.
- ii. Ensure representation of certain vulnerable groups such as religious minorities, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, and youth in the V/NF.
- iii. Apart from this, as per the need, other community members/influential such as Nikah Khawan, local councillors etc. can be included in the meetings of the forum from time to time.

Key Functions of Village/ Neighbourhood Forum

- V/NF members will receive trainings on thematic priorities of Aawaz II programme
- V/NF will play a role in behaviour change on Aawaz II thematic areas, through community engagement, sensitising and awareness raising campaigns, collective action plans etc.
- Members of the V/NF will develop their relations through interaction with various concerned government officials to make the facilities accessible for the communities.
- The V/NF will play an important role in disseminating information about the facilities to the community and referring specific cases to the concerned institutions as and when required.
- V/NF will disseminate IEC material created by Aawaz II among community members and individuals.
- The V/NF will work with various vulnerable groups, including minorities, to bring about social harmony and reduce intolerance, and will pre-empt any possible incident which may be dangerous to the general peace situation or to any specific group.
- V/NF will connect and coordinate with other Aawaz II structures and volunteers such as AACs, ACAs, as well as District Forum. This connection will facilitate in amplifying the voices of vulnerable for awareness, advocacy and actions to promote inclusive response and protection of rights.
- Members of V/NFs will develop Collective Community Action Plans (CCAPs) for behaviour change addressing the underlying causes and dynamics of social exclusion, gender inequality, intolerance, child marriage, GBV, and other harmful practices at the community level.

Village/Neighbourhood Forum and Aawaz Aagahi Centre

If any community members approach the RPs with a problem such as gender-based violence; discuss such problems with the concerned members of the V/NF, as it is primarily responsible for resolving such issues. However, the RPs provide full support and facilitate access to necessary resources throughout the process and consult with the Community Facilitators (CFs) when needed.

AAC will support in organising regular meetings of V/NF and will organise special meetings or sessions (for example arranging listening sessions on radio shows) to spread awareness at community level.

Once the V/NF has identified its priority issues, the AAC will facilitate them in planning and addressing these issues. Similarly, they will facilitate the V/NF and community members to develop the Collective Community Action Plans (CCAPs) on behaviour change around Aawaz II thematic areas. The CCAPs are based on an assessment of the thematic priorities of the community, with a specific focus on needs of specific groups (such as women, youth, religious minorities, persons with disabilities and transgender persons). The CCAPs assist people to analyse the problems, identify the root causes and determine the course of action, with required resources, to address these.



Aawaz II

Inclusion • Rights • Reducing Exploitation