# Group exercise:

# INTRODUCTION TO CEA – Queueing at the Ukraine-Polish Border Scenario

#### Facilitator Notes

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| Overview of this group exercise | |
| **Time:** | 45 minutes |
| **Purpose:** | To help participants understand the purpose and importance of community engagement using an everyday, non-humanitarian, scenario of poor customer service at a border. |
| **Format:** | Group and plenary discussion based on a scenario handout |
| **When:** | Day one – morning |
| **Materials:** | * One participant hand out per group * Facilitator notes below to help you guide the discussion * Flip chart paper and pens for each group |

#### Instructions to run this group exercise

1. Give each group a copy of the participant handout *‘. Intro to CEA – Queueing at the Ukraine-Polish Border Scenario’* and ask them to read it in their groups. As a group they need to answer the 3 questions at the bottom of the scenario and write their answers on a flipchart. They should allocate one person to report back during plenary **(30 mins)**
2. Ask one group to feedback per question, then ask if other groups had anything different and use the discussion points below to highlight anything groups did not consider. Close the group exercise by asking one or two people to share what they learnt from this exercise **(15 mins)**

#### Queueing at the Ukraine-Polish border scenario

Around 175 IDPs, including children and the elderly, are waiting to cross the Ukraine-Poland border one day in March 2022. They are waiting to cross to the Polish side. According to those who have been "lucky" enough to get to Poland, the border crossing takes eight hours. Small groups of a few people are allowed to cross in order to complete the paperwork.

After three hours at the border in cold weather, people are allowed to enter the neutral zone. There is very little space in this zone for people who have also brought a lot of suitcases. As the zone is designed to accommodate about 100 people at a time, it is very crowded. A woman with four small children talks quietly to the border guard to find out what she can do to get a better place.

But the queue to cross the border is not moving. The border guard informs the citizens that the queue will start moving in 10 minutes, but there is no movement for about two hours. During this time, several more groups of people were allowed into the neutral zone. Eventually, the queue starts moving, but some people start complaining of hypothermia, and everyone becomes upset. One of the people trying to cross the border, an elderly man, shouts at the border guard and threatens to hit him. The border guard shouts back and stops the queue from moving to the Polish side.

*Internally displaced persons cross the border at the Krakovets-Korchova crossing point on 26 February 2022. photo: getty imagesA group of people walking down a street

Description automatically generated*

**Questions for group discussion – answers on a flip chart**

# What caused the situation?

# How it could have been prevented?

# What are the similarities between this situation and Red Cross Red Crescent work in communities?

#### Discussion points

**Q1. What caused the situation?**

* Lack of understanding of IDPs' needs and consultation.
* Poor quality of service - areas of stay for those wishing to cross the border are poorly equipped.
* Lack of up-to-date and reliable information - e.g., on the duration of the paperwork, reasons for delays, services that the border service is seeking to provide, etc.
* Poor relations between border guards and citizens wishing to cross the border - the only way citizens can voice their needs is by shouting and threatening violence.
* Cultural aspects, e.g., culture of patience; disbelief in the situation (i.e., this is how it works, nothing will change, etc.); hesitant to complain or afraid to speak up against "authorities".
* Lack of choice for citizens, which creates an imbalance of power between IDPs (who need to travel) and border services (who provide a single service).
* Border guards' approach (their skills, behaviour and attitude) to dealing with their "clients".
* Lack of ways to complain about the service (and the means to respond to them).
* Lack of monitoring, e.g., time taken to process crossing documents, number of people wishing to cross the border, passenger's perception of the service.

**Q2. How could it have been prevented?**

* The Border Guard Service should have conducted a proper demand and needs assessment after the outbreak of the war so that they understood the needs of the community/citizens - all segments of the community, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
* The community should have been consulted on the type of services they would like to receive.
* Honest, timely and relevant information should be provided, e.g., time of processing, reasons for delays.
* Border guards should be trained in proper communication with citizens so that they can explain to them what is happening.
* Border guard personnel should have a code of conduct governing the treatment of citizens, signed, and understood by all staff.
* The border guard service should fulfil its promises, e.g., to provide services within a certain time frame.
* The border guard service has a functioning complaints and feedback system that responds to and addresses customer complaints.
* A monitoring system is in place to measure punctuality and problems.

**Q3: What are the similarities between this situation and Red Cross Red Crescent work in communities?**

* **Insufficient resources** – URCS also provides services that people need, but often do not have enough resources to meet people's needs, so difficult choices have to be made about who to help and how to help them.
* **Not understanding the needs** - limited assessment or poor consultation with the community can lead to URCS providing goods or services that do not really meet people's needs, especially in emergency situations when time is of the essence. This can damage our relationships with communities, which can affect service delivery and staff safety.
* **Not understanding the different needs of different groups** - Different people and groups have different priorities that the NS should consider and address. We also need to be careful not to disadvantage certain groups in the provision of services.
* **Poor communication** – not providing timely, accurate and relevant information to communities about who we are and what we are doing, and when there are delays or challenges, can lead communities to lose trust in us, or have unrealistic expectations about what we can deliver.
* **No opportunity to ask questions or make complaints** – not having a system to listen and respond to concerns or complaints can cause frustration, and even lead to threats or violence. This damages our relationship with communities and means we miss opportunities to make important improvements to our work.
* **Power imbalance** - there is a power imbalance between the ‘users’ (communities) and the service providers (us). This can create the risk of exploitation where staff or volunteers can abuse their position and ask for money or services in exchange for goods and services.
* **Lack of choice** - often communities also don’t have a choice in who they receive help from, we may be the only agency providing support in their area. This can sometimes lead to communities (and even our own staff and volunteers) to believe they should be grateful for the support provided, even if it does not meet their needs or is provided in a respectful way.
* **Costs to end users** – accessing our services may also result in costs for communities, often in the form of time that could be spent doing other activities. For example, time is needed to travel to and wait at distribution points.
* **Lack of monitoring of learning** - this may not be the first time the queue has moved for a long time. Similarly, humanitarian organisations often make the same mistakes over and over again without learning from the past.
* **Decide what to monitor** - In our work, we often monitor the quantity of what we do (# of items provided, people trained etc), but like the border service scenario this does not tell us whether we met peoples’ needs or they were satisfied with the quality of support provided. Communities should be consulted on what success means to them and then form part of monitoring process to check their levels of satisfaction with services provided.