

# Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action

## A Handbook for Practitioners

Better governance means  
greater participation coupled  
with accountability

*Kofi Annan, 2000*

ALNAP

Active Learning Network for Accountability and  
Performance in Humanitarian Action

This handbook was written by the Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD) team, which has been working on 'The Global Study on Consultation with and Participation by Beneficiaries and Affected Populations in the Process of Planning, Managing, Monitoring and Evaluating Humanitarian Programmes': Charlotte Dufour, François Grünewald and Karla Levy, with special contributions from Christine Bousquet, Véronique de Geoffroy and Eric Levron.

The support of the Global Study Steering Group has been invaluable, particularly that of its chairperson, André Griekspoor.

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# Foreword

Humanitarian agencies have long believed that increased consultation and participation of people affected by crises should improve accountability and the quality of humanitarian assistance. And more so, participation should acknowledge the right of affected populations to self-determination. The thinking, language and policy of humanitarianism have reflected these aspirations but, in reality, there has been little impact at field level. There are undoubtedly real barriers to participation: the lack of time to consult in life-threatening situations, the lack of coherent social structures within displaced populations or fear of putting people at risk, to name just a few. In the face of these difficulties, the humanitarian community has been hesitant to translate ideas into practice.

The Global Study on the participation of affected populations in humanitarian assistance provides a platform from which we begin to really test these assumptions and expectations. This draft Practitioners Handbook is based on a comprehensive programme of research in five different humanitarian emergency situations – Afghanistan, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Columbia and Sri Lanka. Literature reviews in three languages further supported this work. The handbook provides the most detailed road map to date for field workers to find practical approaches for involving affected communities in the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions. It offers a deeper understanding of what participation in humanitarian assistance involves, and how in conflict situations and disaster environments participation can be given a more prominent role.

This handbook is ultimately intended to be used by international humanitarian personnel as well as staff working for national and local organisations. We acknowledge that in its present form the handbook focuses more on the former. Thus, efforts will be made during the piloting phase to canvass the views and experiences of national and

local staff in order to ensure a more inclusive final version. Last but not least, feedback from affected populations on this work will actively be sought throughout the process to ensure that their views are fully reflected in the next version.

There is still a long way to go before participatory practices are mainstreamed into humanitarian action but we believe that the Global Study provides a sound basis for beginning a sector-wide process of learning and improvement towards this end. We encourage ALNAP member agencies and other organisations to use this handbook, as collective experiences will improve future participation in humanitarian action. We look forward to continuing dialogue on this process, and to your constructive comments on this work.

The Steering Group would like to thank Groupe URD, especially François Grünewald, Charlotte Dufour and Karla Levy, for their extensive work; the Global Study donors – CAFOD, CIDA, Concern Worldwide, DFID/CHAD, ECHO, MFA Germany, MFA Netherlands, SCUK, Sida and USAID/OFDA – for their financial support; and all those who contributed to this work. Finally, thanks go to the ALNAP Secretariat for its support.

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# List of Acronyms

<b>AAA</b>	Agro Action Allemande (German Agro Action)
<b>ACF</b>	Action Contre la Faim
<b>ACIA</b>	Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato
<b>ALNAP</b>	Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organisation
<b>CFW</b>	Cash-For-Work
<b>CHW</b>	Community Health Worker
<b>COW</b>	Community Outreach Worker
<b>CVA</b>	Capacity Vulnerability Analysis
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>ECHO</b>	European Commission Humanitarian Office
<b>FFW</b>	Food-For-Work
<b>GOTEC</b>	Goal Team Consult
<b>Groupe URD</b>	Groupe Urgence – Réhabilitation – Développement (Emergency Rehabilitation Development)
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent societies
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>IO</b>	International Organisation
<b>LDC</b>	Local Development Committees
<b>LNGO</b>	Local Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>LRRD</b>	Linking Relief Rehabilitation Development
<b>MSF</b>	Médecins Sans Frontières
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NOVIB</b>	Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (Oxfam Netherlands)
<b>OREWA</b>	Organización Regional Embera Waunaan (Embera Waunaan Regional Organisation)

<b>Oxfam GB</b>	Oxfam Great Britain
<b>PIDP</b>	Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée du Kivu (Integration and Development Programme for the Pygmy People of the Kivu)
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>RSS</b>	Red de Solidaridad Social (Social Solidarity Network)
<b>SCUK</b>	Save the Children – United Kingdom
<b>SEED</b>	Social, Economic, Environmental Developers
<b>TBA</b>	Traditional Birth Attendant
<b>TFC</b>	Therapeutic Feeding Centre
<b>TIP</b>	Trials for Improved Practices
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>VAS</b>	Volontaires Autochtones Solidaires (united native volunteers)
<b>VSF</b>	Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (Veterinarians Without Borders)
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

### Key to symbols

 Objective

 Exercises/focus group activities

 Key questions

 Helpful tips

 Warning or beware

# Preamble

## I BACKGROUND

Involving affected populations in operations to ensure their survival is one of the most difficult challenges confronting the humanitarian world. Despite the rhetoric, and enshrinement of the notion in the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*, the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action remains, for the most part, extremely limited.

Although it is a well-established concept in the development sphere (in practice and in the literature), it has proved far from easy to operationalise in the humanitarian field. In certain circumstances, the simple act of participation can put in jeopardy the lives of affected populations and actors in the field and can compromise humanitarian principles.

There are few recorded examples of affected populations participating in humanitarian action and little guidance material directly related to the humanitarian sector. According to the literature, the risks associated with employing participatory approaches in crisis-affected contexts often overshadow the benefits. Furthermore, vigorous criticism has been levelled at naive approaches to participation.

Yet, evaluations have highlighted many positive outcomes of enhanced participation: from sharper analysis and adapted programming to more effective implementation and increased accountability in project management. The engagement of affected populations in programmes that concern them creates linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development. Most importantly, it demonstrates respect for members of affected populations, as social actors, with insights on their situation, and with competencies, energy and ideas of their own.

It is against this background that the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) in Humanitarian Action commissioned 'The Global Study on Consultation with and Participation by Affected Populations in the Process of Planning, Managing, Monitoring and Evaluating Humanitarian Programmes', which has the following objectives:

- to assess consultation and participation practice in a range of emergency contexts;
- to identify examples of good practice, and gaps or inadequacies in current practice and contributing factors; and
- to improve understanding of consultation and participation.

Five country case studies (Afghanistan, Angola, Colombia, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sri Lanka) were central to achieving these aims. The findings are contained in five separate monographs. The case studies were complemented by extensive analysis of English, French and Spanish literature on participation.

The lessons that they reveal on good practice in regard to participation, as well as potential benefits, constraints and risks, are presented here in the form of a handbook for humanitarian practitioners.

## II OBJECTIVES AND TARGET AUDIENCE

This handbook is designed for **practitioners**; front-line humanitarian field workers are the primary audience. It is they who have direct contact with affected populations, local authorities and, in complex emergencies, parties to the conflict. It is they who make daily judgements and decisions that impact on affected populations. Yet, it is questionable to what degree they do so in a participatory manner.

The practitioner audience includes both expatriate humanitarian personnel, and professionals working in their own country, for either

international or national aid organisations. This handbook, however, is targeted particularly at expatriate staff and international aid organisations, since a commonly observed weakness of humanitarian action is the former's tendency to undervalue and to fail to stress, mobilise and enhance the capacities of national stakeholders. The main goal of the handbook is to assist them in this endeavour, providing guidance on how to adopt participatory approaches and how to avoid associated pitfalls and risks.

The handbook also targets those in positions of influence, who can impose a vision or an expectation in regard to participation. These actors include donors, who play an important role in stimulating, imposing or constraining participatory approaches, colleagues from Head Quarters, Managers of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and staff responsible for daily desk management. The latter influence and guide field workers in relation to participation, often seen as too time and resource consuming or just too 'difficult'.

Numerous handbooks on participation have been written for development practitioners. Consequently, this one does not seek to reproduce the same content, but, rather, to address specifically the issues that fashion, restrict, and support the involvement of affected populations in humanitarian action.

It contains a set of reflections and highlights the entry points and tools that can assist contextual analysis and decision-making, observing when interaction with affected populations should occur and how the process can be improved. It details a range of participatory processes, outlining the advantages and the limitations of each, as revealed by the five country case studies.

This is not a recipe book that promotes tools for social engineering; it is a handbook that is intended to stimulate thinking. It should be seen as a reference work for use on mission.

### III CONTENT AND USE OF THE HANDBOOK

The handbook has been structured to be an accessible, user-friendly 'field tool'. It is organised in four parts.

**The introduction** raises essential questions pertaining to participation of crisis-affected populations in humanitarian action, and **defines** the key terms used throughout the publication: 'participation', 'crisis-affected populations' and 'humanitarian action'.

**Part 1 is essential reading** It lays the foundations for your strategy to involve affected populations in humanitarian action. Chapter 1 offers guidance in designing such a strategy, exploring factors, relating to the context, the affected population and your organisation, that will affect participation. Chapter 2 presents prerequisites for successful participation: communication and transparency. It proposes basic guidelines for formal and informal communication, which are vital for using the participatory tools presented in following chapters.

**Part 2** proposes a series of tools and approaches to help put into practice a participation strategy, relative to the various phases of the project cycle. It offers guidance on the potential risks of participation, and underscores the importance of taking into account at all times the following cross-cutting issues: the security of all of those engaged in the activity, including personnel, partners and members of the affected population; the threat of exclusion and/or stigmatisation of minority groups; and the impartiality and legitimacy of your organisation.

**Part 3** takes a sectoral stance, presenting examples of tools for, and approaches to, participation in various intervention sectors common to humanitarian aid: food security and nutrition; health; shelter; and water and sanitation. It is by no means an exhaustive list, but it illustrates how the general methodology outlined in this handbook can be applied in different domains.

The handbook concludes by supplying guidance on how to **evaluate the participation strategy** that has been put in place.

The handbook is conceived as a modular publication: after completing the introduction and part 1, readers may navigate at will, according to their particular areas of interest, referring backwards or forwards between the project-cycle stages and sector-specific chapters.

## IV FINAL TIPS

Involving affected populations in humanitarian action in a crisis context is a challenging undertaking, which can seem dangerous and complex, or even impossible due to evident constraints. If handled with care and skill, though, it is more than likely to be a richly rewarding experience for both you and the people you are looking to assist.

Beyond the tools presented in this handbook, successful participation relies first and foremost on the attitude of those engaged in humanitarian action. The core messages in this handbook can be summarised as follows:

- **BE AWARE** ... of the local context and its social and cultural dynamics, of political divisions and lines of power, and of the stakes and potential pitfalls. Being conscious of this enables one to be cautious without being suspicious, to tailor one's expectations to current realities and to avoid undue disappointments. It is central to gaining the respect of those whom you seek to engage.
- **LISTEN, OBSERVE** ... with your eyes and with your ears, but, also, with the eyes and the ears of those who you are trying to understand, and assist or protect. Bear in mind that affected populations have a holistic and integrated view of their own needs and strategies, and that the earlier you involve them, the greater their motivation to engage in a joint venture. Empathy

and reflected understanding can go a long way to making a complex process manageable.

- **PAY ATTENTION TO THE HUMAN FACTOR** Despite all efforts to develop and apply methods to improve the process of participation, successes and failures can often be attributed to the presence of the right person with the right attitude, understanding and skills, being in the right place at the right time. Pay utmost attention to the composition of your team, and allow time to breathe and to deliberate.
- **ENJOY!** At the heart of participation is a meeting of different individuals, cultures, skills, beliefs and values. This is an opportunity to learn and to share experiences; humanitarian aid workers can benefit as much as affected populations. Only an enthusiastic team can stimulate successful participation.

# INTRODUCTION

## Participation of Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action

Go with the people. Live with them.  
Learn from them. Love them.  
Start with what they know. Build with what they  
have. But of the best leaders  
When the job is done, the task accomplished  
The people will all say,  
We have done this ourselves.

*Lao Tse, circa 700 B.C.*

## A FEW ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Engaging affected populations in humanitarian action is a challenging endeavour. Before doing so, it is essential to ask a few questions.

### Participation ... 'why?'

- Is it to make my work easier? To facilitate needs assessment and targeting? To decrease project costs by introducing a cost-sharing mechanism (with affected populations), or by using cheap local implementing agents or partners?
- Is it to reduce the level of insecurity to which humanitarian personnel are exposed, again through recourse to local implementing agents or partners?
- Is it to pay lip service to a paragraph requested by donors in the project formulation?
- Does it derive from consideration that participation can considerably improve the short- and the longer-term impacts of humanitarian action?
- Or is it based on genuine recognition that members of affected populations are not passive recipients of aid, but actors responsible for their own survival and future, with existing competencies and aspirations?

### Participation ... 'who?'

- Who should I work with? Individual members of the affected population? Local political structures? Grassroots/community-based organisations (CBOs)?
- Should I form a partnership with other organisations to encourage participatory processes?
- What are the risks of becoming embroiled in local power struggles? In the case of conflict, can collaboration with certain stakeholders compromise my impartiality and independence?

- What is the chance of those engaged in the aid process suffering human-rights violations or being stigmatised as a result of participation?

#### Participation ... 'how?'

- How do I reconcile the need to respect humanitarian principles (impartiality and independence) with a participatory approach?
- What can be done to avoid participation leading to discrimination against certain participants?
- If participation means leaving space for affected populations to express their views, how can I avoid imposing my own vision of participation?
- How can the process be implemented in such a way as to ensure the safety of aid actors and members of the affected population? How should the security of humanitarian personnel be managed?

There is no single answer to many of these questions and no instant means of responding to the challenges associated with participation in humanitarian crises. The first step is to be aware of what we are talking about and who we are referring to when we are discussing 'participation of affected populations in humanitarian action'.

## A PARTICIPATION ...

'There is a humanitarian response where the human aspect has been lost.'  
Representative of an international NGO, **Angola**.<sup>1</sup>

### A DEFINING PARTICIPATION

Participation in humanitarian action is understood as the **engagement** of affected populations in one or more phases of the project cycle: assessment; design; implementation; monitoring; and evaluation. This engagement can take a variety of forms.

Far more than a set of tools, participation is first and foremost a **state of mind**, according to which members of affected populations are at the heart of humanitarian action, as social actors, with insights on their situation, and with competencies, energy and ideas of their own.

**Participation is not something to be imposed but rather, the product of what you want to do and what the affected population wants to do, and what is possible in a given context.**

### B THREE APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION

There are three main approaches to participation: instrumental; collaborative; and supportive.

- In regard to the **instrumental** approach, participation is a **means** of achieving programme goals. If applied in a relevant manner, in all phases of the project cycle, and in a way that

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<sup>1</sup> Robson, P., The Case of Angola, monograph produced by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) in Humanitarian Action as part of its 'Global Study on consultation with and participation by beneficiaries and affected populations in the process of planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating humanitarian action', (London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2003), p. 43.

respects the rhythms and capacities of the affected population, it can lead to the strengthening of these competencies. But doing so is not an objective in itself.

One should be careful not to slip from the instrumental mode to outright manipulation of populations, CBOs or local committees, which might result in project failure, or even the weakening of local capacities and to security problems for aid workers.

- The **collaborative** approach is based on an **exchange**: both sets of stakeholders pool their resources to achieve a common goal. The aid organisation aims to build on the capacity of the affected population and to learn from it.

It presupposes a minimal social structure within the affected population. Collaboration can be informal, such as the delegation of certain tasks, or it can be formalised as partnerships between structures. It implies involvement of the affected population throughout the project cycle.

- In relation to the **supportive** approach, the aid organisation supports the affected population in carrying out its initiatives. This can encompass the provision of material, financial or technical support for existing initiatives or strengthening the population's capacity to initiate new projects.

Crucial to this approach is the need for aid organisations to **seek and recognise existing capacity** and potential within the affected population.

There are bridges between these three approaches, although some are more difficult to establish than others. To go from collaboration to supporting local initiatives is a logical and relevant step. But to move from a supportive to an instrumental approach risks undermining trust between partners and could compromise the future of the relationship.

**Strategic choices should be made on the basis of an appropriate assessment of the context and of the capacities of the various actors; this evaluation should be continually revised and adjusted.**

**Table 1** A typology of participation in humanitarian action<sup>2</sup>

Type of participation	Description
<b>Passive participation</b>	The affected population is informed of what is going to happen or what has occurred. While this is a fundamental right of the people concerned, it is not one that is always respected.
<b>Participation through the supply of information</b>	The affected population provides information in response to questions, but it has no influence over the process, since survey results are not shared and their accuracy is not verified.
<b>Participation by consultation</b>	The affected population is asked for its perspective on a given subject, but it has no decision-making powers, and no guarantee that its views will be taken into consideration.
<b>Participation through material incentives</b>	The affected population supplies some of the materials and/or labour needed to operationalise an intervention, in exchange for a payment in cash or in kind from the aid organisation.
<b>Participation through the supply of materials, cash or labour</b>	The affected population supplies some of the materials, cash and/ or labour needed to operationalise an intervention. This includes cost-recovery mechanisms.
<b>Interactive participation</b>	The affected population participates in the analysis of needs and in programme conception, and has decision-making powers.
<b>Local initiatives</b>	The affected population takes the initiative, acting independently of external organisations or institutions. Although it may call on external bodies to support its initiatives, the project is conceived and run by the community; it is the aid organisation that participates in the population's projects.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Pretty, J. 'Alternative systems of inquiry for a sustainable agriculture', in the Institute of Development Studies Bulletin, vol. 25, (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 1994), pp. 37–48.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-Holland in Barrancabermeja, **Colombia**, supported the return of displaced persons to Ciénaga del Opon by offering a medical follow-up and by training community health workers. The project contained no political discourse on the future of this group of 'returnees', and MSF had no desire to strengthen its social organisation. The objective was 'purely health-oriented'.

The project was implemented in a participatory manner, with the training content shaped by participants, through meetings and according to the most common diseases prevalent in the community. Participants decided on training venues and dates. The trainees carried out the final evaluation of the results and of the trainers.

Although the programme did not set out to develop the group's social standing, following the departure of the MSF team, community health workers mobilised themselves and asked the government to establish a health post. MSF was invited to support them in their lobbying.

### **C A TYPOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION**

An instrumental, collaborative or supportive approach is put into practice through a series of participatory activities, or types of participation.

Each is subject to risks and opportunities, which must be constrained or facilitated, respectively. It is important to understand these factors, and to be able to identify which type to use and when, where and how; in short, to comprehend their 'domain of validity'.

### **D THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

Field research carried out as part of the Global Study highlights the reasons and motivations for engaging in participatory processes with affected populations.

### Participation as a moral duty

Participation is, above all, about demonstrating respect for members of affected populations, by recognising their right to have a say in choices that impact on their lives. For some, participation of affected populations is defined as a right.

In **Colombia**, participation is considered to be both a duty and a right of citizenship. Civil society—via CBOs, church organisations and committees for internally displaced persons (IDPs), for instance—actively partakes in humanitarian action, whether by instigating and designing its own interventions or by participating in those of external actors. Local communities have been known to refuse to be involved in the activities of international aid organisations in cases where they were not consulted.

Article 12.1 of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (ratified by 191 countries)

'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'

### Participation to improve programme quality

Humanitarian action formulated with affected populations is often better adapted to the needs and the local context. As a result, it is more relevant, efficient and effective. Involving the affected population from the outset establishes a level of ownership that will help to increase the intervention's chance of success and its longer-term connectedness and/or sustainability.

Organisations involved in an IDP resettlement programme in Huambo Province, **Angola**, held extensive consultations with people that had been displaced. They discovered that their primary criteria for resettlement

included the ability to live alongside members of their original community, in conditions that resembled those of their home villages, and to have access to land in order to produce food. They were even ready to live in areas that were not completely safe—to avoid living in camps.

Humanitarian organisations helped these IDPs to negotiate access to land so as to build 'temporary villages'. This was judged to be a successful experience, in relation to the larger IDP camps, since the 'new villages' did not require external management, had fewer social problems, and generated some food of their own.

#### Participation to increase security

Establishing relationships based on trust with affected populations can ensure access to important security information and increase the security of the organisation's personnel.

#### Participation to gain access

Delegating or engaging in partnerships with members of affected populations or associated structures can be a way of gaining access to areas or groups that are inaccessible to foreign organisations. **But be careful!** Participation is not about sending a local stakeholder to dangerous areas in order to protect expatriates or the staff of an international organisation.

#### Participation to support and increase local capacity

It is common for humanitarian organisations, especially international bodies, to function separate to local institutions and structures. Working with them is essential, however, as they usually have genuine capacities on the ground and are often the first to respond. Strengthening their capacity is key in terms of preparing for future crises and for **linking relief and development**. It is also a matter of **respect**.

### **Participation to give a voice to traditionally marginalised groups and individuals**

Engaging marginalised groups can help to increase their confidence to speak out, to take decisions and to act, as well as to reduce discrimination. Participation that empowers individuals to represent themselves can have a positive impact on their safety (knowledge of individual and collective rights and increased capacity to negotiate with authorities, for example).

*'The training has given us lots of skills ... Before, we didn't know about children's rights but now we can explain these things to other children; we can influence future generations. Now we have leadership in our villages ... The club has helped to reduce discrimination, especially caste discrimination ...'*

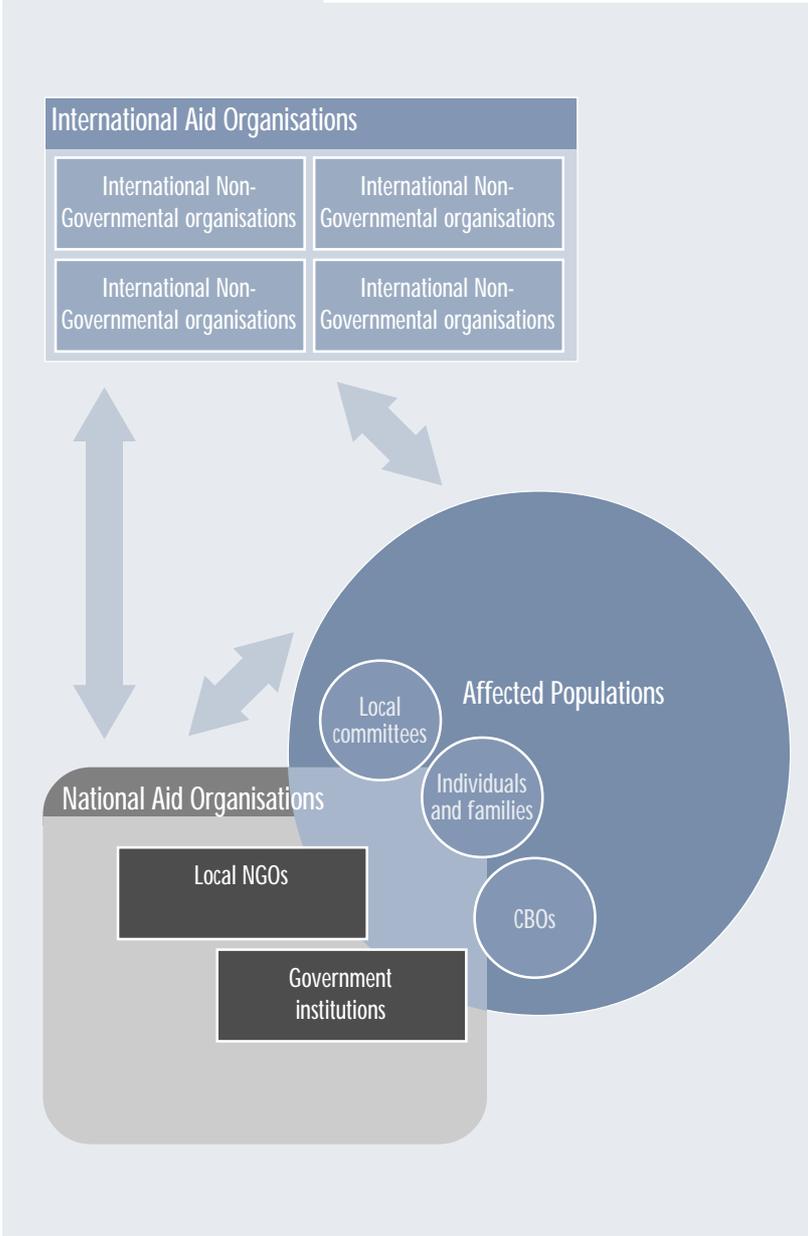
*Mixed-caste group of teenage girls who work as animators in a Save the Children UK club in Siruppiddy, Jaffna, Sri Lanka.*

## **B ... OF CRISIS-AFFECTED POPULATIONS ...**

### **A DEFINING A 'CRISIS-AFFECTED POPULATION'**

The term 'crisis-affected population(s)' or 'affected population(s)' is used throughout this handbook to refer to people that have been, or are, affected by a man-made or natural disaster, such as those who have been wounded or raped, those who have lost family members and personal assets, or those who have been forced to leave their homes. It also encompasses groups or individuals that have been or are indirectly affected, including host populations in situations of population displacement. How sub-groups or individual members of the population are affected will vary according to their socio-economic, environmental and cultural circumstances and to the type of crisis.

Figure 1 Typology of stakeholders



## B A TYPOLOGY OF STAKEHOLDERS

Participation involves far more stakeholders than just the affected population and humanitarian organisations. A typology is proposed in Table 2.

Table 2 Typology of humanitarian situations

Type	Description	Speed of onset Predictability	Scale	Impact/ consequences
<b>Natural disaster</b>	Drought	Slow/rapid onset	Localised	Displacement
	Earthquake	Predictable/ unpredictable	Country-wide	Loss of life and disability
	Flood/landslide	Recurrent/rare	Region-wide	Loss of assets
	Volcanic eruption			Famine
	Hurricane			Epidemics
<b>Conflict</b>	Disease			
<b>Conflict</b>	Ethnic	Slow/rapid onset	Inter-/intra-state	Trauma
	Political	Predictable/ unpredictable		Social crisis
	Resource-based	Protracted/acute		Etc.

The affected population does not only comprise individuals or families. In most instances, local structures, such as CBOs and committees (IDP bodies, women's groups and councils of elders, for instance) emanate from, and represent, certain groups within the affected population.

National aid organisations include local NGOs and government institutions. It is important to stress that, in many crisis situations, there is considerable overlap between national aid organisations and the affected population. Local NGOs, for example, are composed of members of the affected population.

In Eastern DRC, the Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu (PIDP-Kivu) is an NGO, but it can also be

considered part of the affected population, since its members are Pygmies living in affected areas.

International aid organisations include international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, international organisations (IOs) and donor institutions (bilateral, multilateral and private).

Who, as an aid organisation, you can engage with, in order to facilitate or ensure the participation of affected populations, can vary. **You should thus be aware of the range of stakeholders that exist in a given context, and of their relationship with, and their proximity to, the affected population.**

The different types of relationships that can be established between stakeholders for this purpose are presented below.

## **C APPROACHING THE AFFECTED POPULATION**

The participation of affected populations can be either direct, or indirect.

### **Direct participation**

Members of the affected population participate as individuals in the various phases of an aid programme, such as by attending focus groups organised by your organisation, supplying labour for project implementation, voting or partaking in decision-making, and by suggesting ideas for interventions.

### **Indirect participation** (or participation by representation)

Structures that represent or develop within the affected population (like CBOs and village committees) participate in humanitarian inter-

ventions by, for example, organising discussion fora, surveying villagers and selecting members of the affected population to be assisted.

In order to facilitate the participation of affected populations, whether direct or indirect, aid organisations can engage with other aid organisations. The potential combinations are numerous. For instance:

- an international NGO can work with a local NGO that represents the affected population or enjoys a close relationship with it—via a network of community workers, for example;
- a government institution can delegate activities to a local or an international aid organisation that has the resources (including skills and human capacity) to engage in participatory processes with an affected population;
- an international NGO can work through local government committees (such as health committees); and
- a local NGO with few skills or resources for participation can turn to an international aid organisation that can offer training in participatory tools and methods.

To ensure that such alliances are effective, though, it is important to conduct a precise stakeholder analysis, paying attention to constituency, membership and the mode of operation of the structures that you engage with.

Who you engage with and how you do so will depend on the situation, bearing in mind that humanitarian contexts often involve complex political dynamics, where the risk of manipulation and diversion of aid is high, and where collaboration with certain stakeholders (local *and* international) can compromise the impartiality and independence of an individual and an organisation, as well as the security of your staff and the people you seek to assist. Identifying who is who is thus an essential step in the analysis that will inform the design and the implementation of your participatory strategy.



## C ... IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

### A DEFINING HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In this handbook, humanitarian action is defined as the response to needs arising from a man-made or natural disaster.

### B A TYPOLOGY OF HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS

Humanitarian situations differ in terms of type, cause, speed of onset, scale and impact.

Humanitarian crises are often **complex**, with several disasters affecting the same population. This was the case in Nahrin, Afghanistan, where the population was the victim of earthquakes, while still suffering from the consequences of war (landmines and displacement) and drought.

### C APPROACHES TO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Humanitarian action is often referred to as emergency action, with 'traditional' humanitarian interventions consisting essentially of emergency medical assistance and relief (the free provision of food and non-food items). The largest sectors remain food security (food aid, nutrition and agricultural rehabilitation), health, shelter, and water and sanitation.

Humanitarian situations have revealed themselves to be far more complex, though, with many crises becoming '**protracted**' and with humanitarian aid being provided in the same region for years, sometimes decades. Humanitarian action has widened to include **post-crisis** interventions, and **prevention** activities, and responses have evolved, both within 'traditional' sectors (community health, for example), and in new ones (like education and psychosocial programmes).

The importance of linking relief and development and building on local capacities to respond to recurrent crises has thus been brought to

the fore. It is in this context that the participation of affected populations is assuming increasing importance in the field of humanitarian action.

## D YOUR STRATEGY FOR PARTICIPATION

Your strategy for participation is composed of all of the elements that have been described in the introduction. Elaborating your strategy will require, therefore, that you ask yourself, and members of your organisation, the following questions:

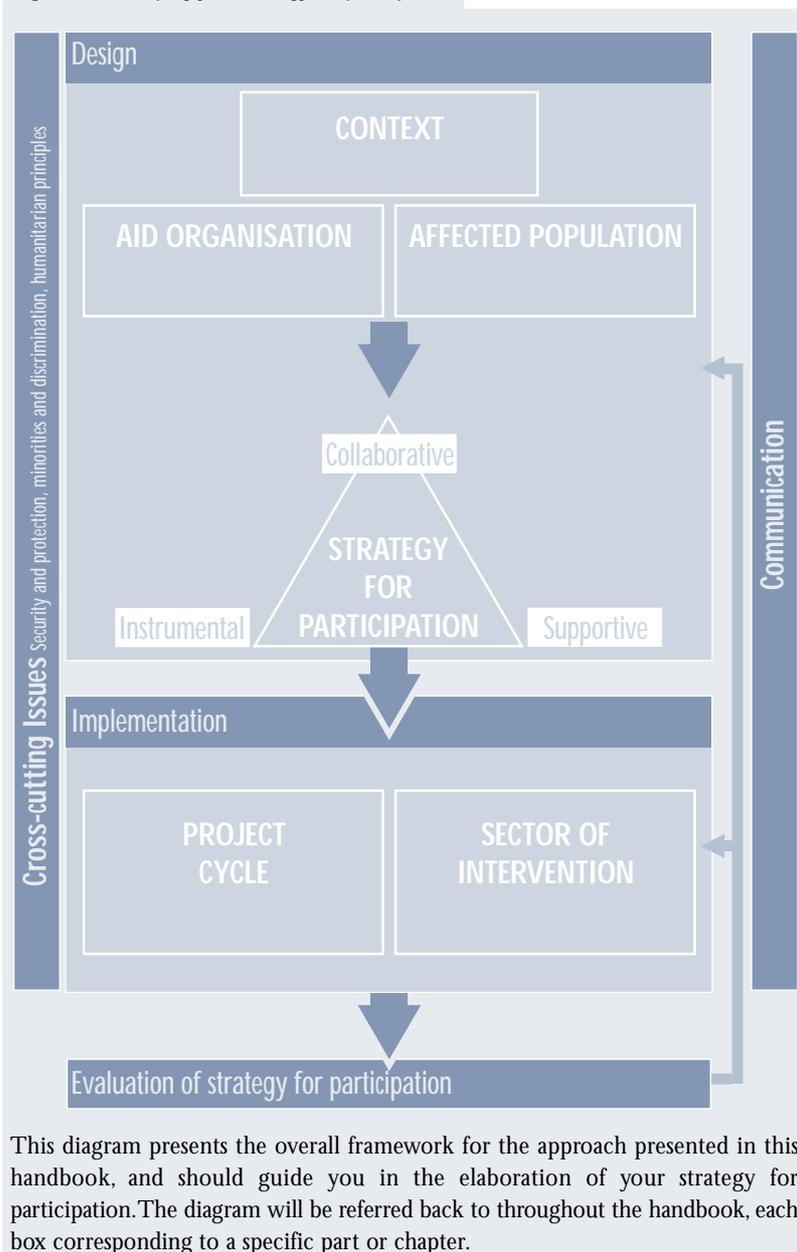
- What **types of participation** would be most appropriate?
- What overall **approach** (instrumental, collaborative, supportive) is most suitable?
- Which **tools and methods** can I use in the field?
- Should I engage **directly** with individual members of the affected population, or **via existing structures** that emanate from it?
- Should I engage with **other aid organisations** or government institutions to facilitate the participation of affected populations, and, if so, with which ones?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to analyse the factors that will constrain and support participation, in the specific environment in which you are planning to act. These factors are related to three key elements of any humanitarian situation:

- the **context**;
- the **affected population**; and
- your **aid organisation**.

Analysis of these factors will highlight the opportunities and risks that will inform the design of your strategy (see chapter 1).

**Figure 2** Developing your strategy for participation



This diagram presents the overall framework for the approach presented in this handbook, and should guide you in the elaboration of your strategy for participation. The diagram will be referred back to throughout the handbook, each box corresponding to a specific part or chapter.

Regardless of the choices that you make, there are a number of prerequisites for successful participation that relate to the building of trust between your organisation and the affected population: communication and transparency. (See chapter 2.)

# Part 1

## Designing a Strategy for Participation in Humanitarian Action

1

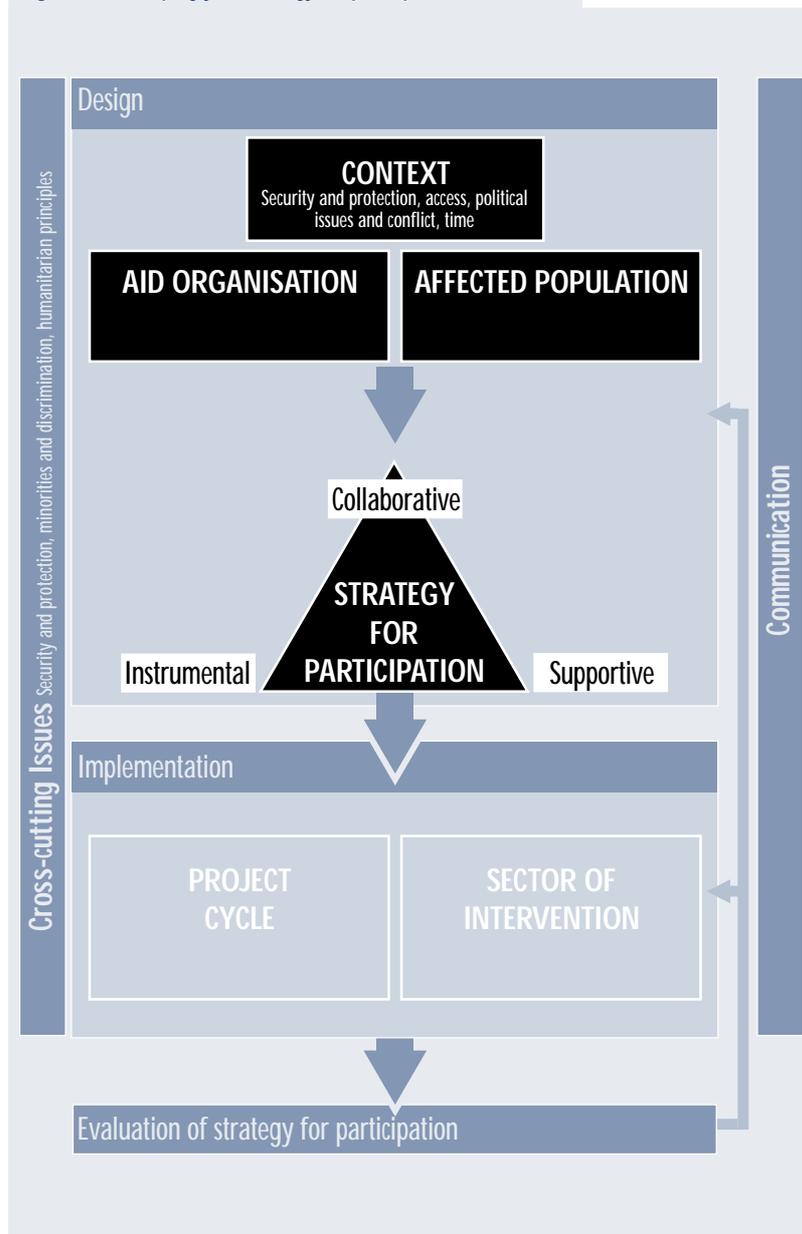
### © Objective of Part 1

By the end of Part 1, you should be able to clarify your objectives and be able to design a strategy for participation and a communication based on an 'opportunities-and-risks' analysis of the context, the affected population's features and competencies, and your organisation's mandate, expertise and capacity.

Participation is like a kaleidoscope:  
it changes colour and form  
depending on who is using it.

*Philip White, 1994*

**Figure 3** Developing your strategy for participation: the context



## Chapter 1

# Factors Affecting Participation in Humanitarian Action

### 🎯 Objective of Chapter 1

To enable practitioners to design a strategy for participation by identifying:

- the reasons for, and the goals of, this strategy;
- the opportunities and risks arising from the characteristics of the context, the affected population and your organisation;
- those whom you might potentially wish to engage; and
- the type of participation you will employ.

## 1.1 A Continuous Process

Defining your strategy requires detailed understanding and careful examination of the factors that will mould, constrain and support participation. These factors, relating to the characteristics of the context, the affected population and of your organisation, are discussed in the following sections.

For each factor, **questions** are asked that should enable you to identify the **opportunities and risks** related to participation. Analysis of these opportunities and risks should guide the formulation of your participation strategy.

**Before engaging in participatory exercises**, you can begin by collecting background information on matters pertaining to these questions. This can be done, for example, via:

- a review of key references in the literature (in the fields of anthropology and political history, for instance), including 'grey' literature, such as mission reports, evaluations and personal accounts;
- the holding of interviews with people who know the context and/or have experience of aid programmes in the region; and
- attendance at meetings.

1

Answering these questions is a **continuous process**. Your growing experience of the context, changes in the situation, and the evolution of your relationship with the affected population and other stakeholders, *inter alia*, all lead you continuously to **re-assess, re-fashion and re-negotiate your strategy for participation**.

Remember, when initially engaging in a participatory process, you know where you are coming from, and you may have a general idea of where you would like to go, but you do not know where you will arrive at!

## 1.2 Developing your strategy for participation: the context

### 1.2.1 SECURITY AND PROTECTION

In most crisis contexts, and specifically in situations of armed conflict, the population with which you work can be at risk, especially when gaining control over the population is a strategic objective of warring factions. Even after natural disasters, when law and order is disrupted or in instances where the population is unhappy with relief and rehabilitation activities, there can be high levels of tension, which can be extremely dangerous for the affected population, as well as for humanitarian actors. The security of humanitarian personnel and protection of affected populations are thus two facets of the same reality.

### **A The risks to the security of humanitarian personnel**

Security risks can be a constraint on participation, where access to the field is limited and when security conditions do not allow time to be spent (especially at night) in villages or camps, for example. Engaging with specific groups can also lead parties to the conflict to perceive you as partial, thus making you and/or the people you work with potential targets.

Security, though, can also be considered a motivating factor. The more a programme is seen as relevant and participatory, based on mutual respect and trust, the more those who you seek to assist, and the structures with which you work, will care about your welfare, and, when danger arises, provide you with security-related information.

Collaborating with the affected population, or with stakeholders already engaged with it, can also allow you to intervene in areas that are inaccessible to foreigners for security reasons. And, *vice-versa*, collaboration with international or national aid organisations can enhance the safety of members of the affected population and/or local stakeholders (see below).

### **B The protection of affected populations**

Although protection activities *per se* (such as the dissemination of international humanitarian law) remain the responsibility of legally mandated institutions—including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)—the vision now shared by the majority of humanitarian actors is much wider. Humanitarian organisations have a responsibility at two levels:

- ensuring that humanitarian interventions do not increase the security risks to the affected population—the '**do-no-harm**' approach; and

- integrating measures into technical programmes that **reinforce the protection of affected populations.**

The following are all examples of how the protection of affected populations can be integrated into technical programmes: removing camps from areas close to fighting; ensuring appropriate lighting around latrines to avoid people (especially women) being attacked here at night; organising distribution sites in such a way as to prevent violent invasions; and taking account of issues concerning land rights in a shelter programme.

Participatory techniques can be used to assess security risks, vulnerability factors, and opportunities for mitigating these dangers. For instance, you can carry out a 'do-no-harm' analysis with the people

#### Focus group on 'doing-no-harm' in relation to specific technical sectors

Questions to be discussed include:

What are the potential risks associated with programme for marginalised groups (such as the poor, women or children)?

Would people targeted by the programme become a target for discrimination?

Have gender issues been approached in a sensitive manner?

#### Focus group on conflict analysis in relation to a particular technical sector

Might resources mobilised by the programme attract the attention of other parties who might try to access them in a violent manner?

Might the sharing of resources create tension in the community? If yes, what would be the best way to avoid it?

concerned, to ensure that, at the very least, programmes do not exacerbate security problems.

But before engaging in participatory techniques, it is important to bear in mind that **participation can entail risks** for the affected population. Collecting information in a conflict area, for example, can be extremely dangerous. Questions that seem anodyne can yield militarily sensitive information, such as: what distance from the frontline are the wells that IDPs use to fetch water? And which roads can food convoys use to lower the risk of ambush? Apparently benign Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) maps can suddenly be perceived as pieces of military intelligence! The people who supply this kind of data might be put in serious danger. In certain areas, participating in a focus group or responding to a questionnaire can be viewed as subversive. Providing resources (like a computer, money or a car) to support the activities of a CBO, for instance, can make the organisation a target of looters or armed factions.

In some instances, the population, fully aware of the risks, may be unwilling to provide information. However, as trust between your organisation and the affected population is built up through a participatory process, there is usually a time when people will speak out. The responsibility then falls on you to manage the information provided so as not to endanger the lives of informants. Levels of participation should be adapted and adjusted according to what people feel is possible and useful, as opposed to imposing our own participatory agenda to the detriment of those we seek to assist.

**Yet, participation can also serve to reinforce the protection of affected populations.**

*'Women's rights training has been good because women have been given practical ways of resolving their problems . . . We've had lots of military round-ups. The men have been taken and tortured. One time, 11 men were held. The women's group reported this to the Human Rights Commission in*

Colombo and the men were released. Before the Human Rights Commission got involved we were kicked and tortured for asking about detainees, but all this has stopped now.'

Women participants of an Oxfam GB and Social, Economic, Environmental Developers (SEED) project in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka.

# 1

For the UNHCR, for instance, involving refugees in the management of camps is one of the best ways to ensure protection.

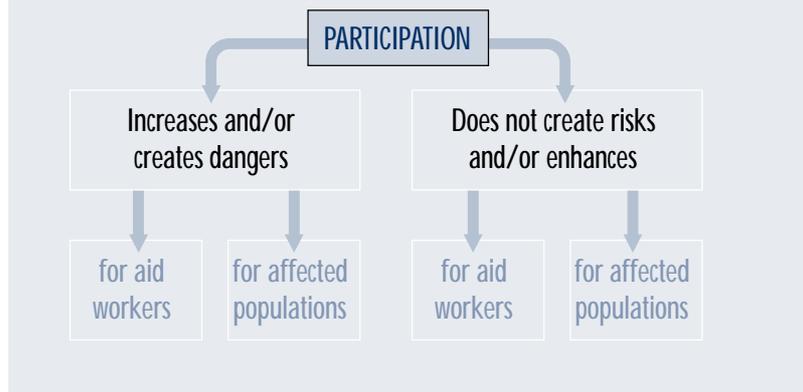
In carrying out their activities in refugee camps or resettlement areas, humanitarian personnel can protect refugees by engaging in participatory processes at all levels of management, from planning to the implementation of assistance programmes. The refugees will thus know their rights and their own communities better. This process will also create a feeling of mutual trust. As a result, aid personnel will have greater and richer access to the refugee population.

(From *Protect Refugees: Field guide for NGOs*, jointly published by the UNHCR and NGO partners, training material for the Reach Out – Refugee Protection Training Project)

In view of the dangers and the difficulties involved, however, protection *per se* cannot always be at the forefront of an intervention. In certain contexts, this would undermine the chances of involving the population in the programme from the outset, since protection is a sensitive issue, which the population might be reluctant to openly engage in.

Furthermore, aiming to reinforce the protection of the population through participation requires good knowledge of the law (international humanitarian law, refugee law and human-rights law), much tact and caution, and a very humble approach towards a sector in which the lives of people are easily put in jeopardy.

Figure 4 The relationship between participation and the security of aid workers and the protection of affected population



## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can participation increase or reduce the risks to the security of humanitarian field workers?
- What security risks might members of the affected population face if they participate in humanitarian activities, and how can these be avoided?
- Can participation be used to reinforce the protection of affected populations whose security is at risk, and, if so, how? Do I have the capacity and the expertise to engage in such activities?

▶ **THE QUESTION OF SECURITY AND PROTECTION WILL CONTINUE TO BE TACKLED THROUGHOUT THE HANDBOOK AS A KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE.**

## 1.2.2 ACCESS: PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL

### A **Physical access**

1 Access problems, most notably due to the security climate, restrict opportunities to engage directly with the affected population and to build the relationship of trust that is necessary for participatory processes. As mentioned above, though, access restrictions can also engender a need to collaborate with, or to delegate activities to, members of the affected population or structures emanating from it. Depending on how it is conducted, such collaboration can create opportunities to strengthen local capacities and to improve relations between your organisation and the affected population.

UN agencies in Colombia, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UNHCR, coordinate with the Red de Solidaridad Social (Social Solidarity Network) and have sought to cooperate with the Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (ACIA) (a CBO representing Afro-Colombians in the Atrato region) and the Organización Regional Embera y Waunan (OREWA) (a CBO representing indigenous groups) in order to access communities needing assistance. Members of UN agencies cannot travel alone along the Atrato River and its tributaries, so they take advantage of CBO infrastructure and information networks.

### B **Cultural access**

To the issue of physical access is added that of 'cultural access', which concerns the difficulty that outsiders may have in relating to a local community as a result of language, behavioural and other cultural barriers. This is of particular importance for expatriate personnel and international aid organisations, but it is also relevant when national aid organisations come from a different area or social group than the affected population. Differences in social background, education, language and accent, for instance, can all serve to create distance between aid workers and members of the affected population.

It is essential, therefore, to collaborate with one or several individuals who not only act as translators, but also help you to interpret various signs. They will be your 'cultural bridge'.

One's behaviour, use of language and means of addressing people, for example, will all contribute to facilitating or hampering relationships with the affected population, thus creating or undermining trust. (This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.)

1

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Do difficulties in terms of physical access limit the possibilities for the participation of affected populations? If so, how can they be overcome?
- What are the potential cultural barriers between you and the affected population, and how can they be overcome? Who would be an appropriate cultural bridge?

### 1.2.3 POLITICAL ISSUES AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS

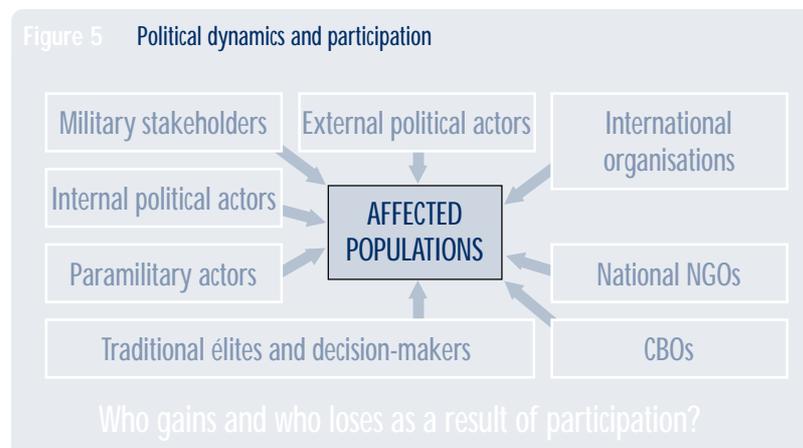
As participatory processes in essence involve multiple stakeholders, they run the risk of being drawn in to local politics. Being aware of local, social and political dynamics is the first step towards limiting potential manipulation of the project.

*The direct role of political actors in the provision of humanitarian assistance in some countries is highly detrimental to civilian participation. This is because official measures, couched in terms of humanitarian aid and civilian protection, often serve political and/or security interests.*

The following illustration should help in understanding who is who, who gains and who loses from the crisis, and why. In both humanitarian and developmental situations, it is essential to be fully aware of the power relations in a given context to ensure sound, effective and

sensitive implementation of a participatory approach. In turbulent environments (the chaos after a large-scale natural disaster or an armed conflict), this is not just crucial with regard to the operation, but it can also be a matter of life or death.

1



## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the key political dynamics, and who are the primary stakeholders involved in the intervention? How do they affect the way that I can engage in participatory processes and with whom?
- Who would gain and who might lose from the various types of participation?
- What are the risks to, and/or the opportunities for, myself and my colleagues and the people I plan to work with?

## 1.2.4 TIME

There are three main elements related to time.

### **A Time and acute emergencies**

Time constraints, notably in the case of rapid onset (natural) disasters (such as floods and earthquakes), are often evoked by aid organisations as reason why engaging in participatory processes is difficult, or even impossible. There is a limited number of situations, however, where time pressure is such that it truly prevents opportunities for participatory measures: in situations, for instance, where people are buried and rescuing them within a few hours is critical to their survival. In most other cases, there is enough time to engage in at least some type of participation (like consultation).

In many emergencies, aid organisations often arrive several days after the disaster, by which time local inhabitants or people from neighbouring areas have already mobilised themselves.

During the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano in Goma, **Eastern DRC**, in January 2002, international aid organisations evacuated the area. Meanwhile, the neighbouring population opened its doors to the victims and local NGOs called on local shopkeepers, entrepreneurs and individuals to provide, *inter alia*, water, food and cooking utensils.

It is thus important for aid organisations, upon arrival, to become aware of what local initiatives are in place, and to consider them in the planning of their own response. Even if it is not possible to be 'participatory' during the initial emergency response, it is essential, at the very least, to keep the affected population informed of what measures you are taking to assist it.

### **B Time and trust**

Participation requires confidence and trust. The amount of time needed to establish this largely depends on attitude and skills, and the way in

which you, your team and your organisation are perceived. In some areas, people tend to extend trust immediately to newcomers, but, in most instances, this is not the case. Although time is often seen as a central tenet of confidence building, listening capabilities and a humble and open attitude are excellent 'door openers'.

1

A key factor is your cultural bridge. For expatriates, this can be a national colleague, the representative of a local aid organisation or a respected elder. For national aid workers who are not from the affected population, it is also important to have a good intermediary who can assist in contacting key stakeholders and groups. Choosing the right person will probably be more important than time.

### **C Time and effectiveness**

Participatory processes seem to take more time than expert-driven ones. But is this always the case? Are there shortcuts? Is the time invested in a participatory process not regained later, through, for example, improved programme quality, increased impact and enhanced security of aid actors?

It is also necessary to remember that participatory processes are time consuming, not only for you, but also for the participants, especially when they are under severe economic or other forms of stress. It is important, therefore, to ensure that activities take into account participants' own schedules and obligations, and to demonstrate that you are aware of, and thankful for, the time that they dedicate to the community through the programme.

*'A long time we are sitting in discussion and winter is coming, and time is lost. If you are coming for humanitarian aid, please bring your aid.'*  
Local inhabitant, Nahrin, Afghanistan.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- In acute emergencies, what opportunities exist to engage with the affected population? How can I take the time to recognise existing initiatives and to explain assistance measures to those concerned?
- Have I identified the cultural bridges and intermediaries who can facilitate the building of trust with affected populations? Is my behaviour and that of my team, and the perception that the affected population has of us, conducive to building trust?
- How can participation be put into practice in a way that supports programme efficiency?
- How can the participation process respect the time constraints on all stakeholders?

1

## 1.3 Developing your strategy for participation: the affected population

### 1.3.1 THE LOCAL CULTURE AND SYSTEM OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Understanding the local population, its culture and its system of social organisation, is fundamental to identifying the opportunities and the risks involved in participatory processes.

#### **A The local culture**

It is important to take into account the population's beliefs, behaviour, language, religion, history and other characteristics, which may affect how it will engage in a humanitarian response.

#### **B Social organisation**

Whether the social structure is hierarchical or egalitarian, or whether it is organised around the nuclear family, the individual or the clan, will influence your choice of participation strategy.

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Many in Sri Lanka perceive ideas about participation to be counter-cultural. Relations between people in different social groups and categories tend to be both prescriptive and hierarchical. Very few civilians are accustomed to exercising choice, or to being involved in decision-making. Even the notion of consultation is foreign.

The situation is very different in **Eastern DRC**, where civil society is extremely active, as evidenced by the strong network of local NGOs that play a key role in humanitarian and development initiatives. International organisations, however, often fail to recognise the value of local NGOs and appear to work directly with civil society, which is a source of frustration for local NGOs.

It is vital, therefore, to understand the local culture and the system of social organisation. However, these are dynamic, subtle and complex areas, so **generic and stereotypic notions of household, community, ethnicity, religion, class, gender and generation should be avoided.**

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How is participation conceived and understood within the local culture?
- What characteristics of the local culture and the system of social organisation affect how the population relates to participation?
- How do these features impact on the possibilities for participation?

### 1.3.2 SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALISATION

In every population there are minority or marginalised groups, which, as a result, are more vulnerable to crises and are often 'voiceless' in regard to local social dynamics. One of the risks of participation is that,

by permitting the expression of local perspectives, these groups will remain excluded from projects.

Working to prevent this, or specifically targeting marginalised groups, can be an objective of a participatory project. But one must be careful not to stigmatise such groups in the process and create or exacerbate social divisions.

Experience shows that it is necessary to work not only with targeted groups, but also with influential members of society and communities as a whole, since empowerment of vulnerable and marginalised groups implies major changes in attitude and behaviour by the wider population. (See the section on targeting.)

Again, in identifying marginalised or 'voiceless' groups, it is important to avoid generic and stereotypic notions of ethnicity, religion, class, gender and generation, for example, and to be sensitive to the local dynamics, values and beliefs that emerge through exclusion and social discrimination.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Which groups in the affected population are marginalised and discriminated against (women, lower castes, elderly and people affected by illness, for instance) and how?
- How can participatory methods be employed to ensure that such groups are not excluded from the aid process, and contribute to reducing discrimination, and/or empowering marginalised groups?
- What are the risks that participation will play a part in or exacerbate the marginalisation and stigmatisation of certain groups? How can this be avoided?

▶ THE QUESTION OF MINORITIES AND DISCRIMINATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE TACKLED THROUGHOUT THE HANDBOOK AS A KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE:

### 1.3.3 IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE AFFECTED POPULATION

The impact of a crisis on a population will directly affect its capacity to participate in a humanitarian response, or to initiate its own response. It will differ according to the population group involved, and, for instance, its social position, wealth, economic activities and geographic location, leaving different groups with different vulnerabilities and capacities.

A crisis can impact on three levels:

#### A Physical

Members of the population are physically disabled as a direct consequence of a natural disaster or conflict.

*'Ninety percent of the people were victims. In some families, all members were wounded. The people are busy with themselves, I don't know if they can do something.'*

*Afghan doctor who was part of the emergency response to the earthquakes in Nahrin, Afghanistan, in spring 2002.*

#### B Psychological

The emotional and psychological ramifications of conflict or natural disasters are profound, often triggering despair, loss of confidence, and loss of one's sense of dignity. Repeated displacement and/or loss of assets, for example, can lead to reluctance to invest resources, time and energy in projects.

*Individuals who are depressed or who suffer other detrimental psychological and emotional effects may not be motivated to think about, or to work for, their betterment or the future of their families and communities. Sri Lanka has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, particularly in the north and the east, and abuse of illicit alcohol (*kassipu*) is widespread, especially by men.*

Following severe crises, individuals may be in a state of **shock**, or **trauma**, making it extremely difficult to partake in emergency responses.

Following heavy rains along the **Venezuelan** coast in 1999, huge landslides washed away entire villages, burying around 50,000 people, and forcing others to flee their homes. Many men and women, having lost relatives and their homes, could not remain passive, volunteering to participate in aid efforts organised by the Venezuelan government and local NGOs. Many were in such a state of shock, though, that they would burst into tears or stand motionless with empty gazes.

### **C Social disintegration**

As a consequence of war or other crises, the local population's system of social organisation can be seriously altered, and traditional consultation and regulation mechanisms can be damaged.

Consultation is an inherent aspect of traditional regulation and decision-making processes in **Afghanistan**, notably through *shuras* (assemblies), in which the all male members discuss issues that concern the community; elders and respected men play a prominent role. By increasing the influence of young armed commanders and generating population displacement, the war has resulted in the dismantlement of such mechanisms.

## **? KEY QUESTIONS**

- How has the crisis impacted on the population's capacity to engage in the humanitarian response? Was everybody affected in the same way?
- Which aspects of participation can be tailored to suit what the affected population wants and can do? And how can the types of participation be adapted to different groups and individuals?
- What kind of support can be provided to facilitate the participation of affected populations?

### 1.3.4 PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF HUMANITARIAN AID

1 A population that has been previously exposed to aid will engage differently with aid organisations than one that has not. A certain (aid) dependency, passivity or disinterest may have developed, especially when top-down relief interventions have occurred recurrently. Past experiences may also prejudice responses in relation to consultation exercises: the population gearing them in line with what it knows the organisation can provide.

Affected populations and local actors also have a long memory when it comes to unfulfilled promises, which can impact differently depending on the type of programme. Top-down, non-participatory processes are numerous, and are often perceived by the population as peripheral—‘a goody you might get’. People do not base their survival on such programmes. In cases where a participatory process has been initiated, however, people feel more committed and place greater reliance on promises made. Thus failure to honour these can have a dramatic bearing on the social equilibrium and the security of aid actors. (Beware of participants who expend energy on participatory processes and feel betrayed!) Once trust between aid organisations and a community has been undermined it can be very hard to rebuild.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How does the population's experience of humanitarian aid affect the way in which it engages with humanitarian aid organisations?
- Where trust has been undermined and a certain amount of passivity has set in, or where the commitment of the affected population is low, what can I do to restore the foundations for successful participation?
- Am I aware of what expectations I am raising in the process, and is my organisation ready to take responsibility for promises it makes in the medium and long terms?

## 1.4 Developing your strategy for participation: the humanitarian aid organisation

### 1.4.1 ORGANISATIONAL MANDATE

The organisational mandate has an important bearing on the extent to which you can engage in participatory processes and how.

'UNHCR is committed to the principle of participation by consulting refugees on decisions that affect their lives.'

UNHCR mission statement, [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

'The displaced population must be involved in the decision-making, management, and organisation of emergency humanitarian assistance.'

Principles of the Red de Solidaridad Social (Social Solidarity Network), government of Colombia.

'Criterios Generales de la Red de Solidaridad Social para la prestación de atención a la población desplazada; Decreto 2569-2000. ('General Criteria of the Social Solidarity Network for support to the displaced population'; Decree 2569-2000.)

Clarifying your organisation's policy position with regard to participation is thus the first step towards engaging with affected populations, since it will determine the nature and rules of your engagement and the level of expectation that you can raise.

For certain organisations (such as signatories to the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*) participation by affected populations is an inherent component of humanitarian action. For others, it is less of a consideration, and emphasis is instead placed on speed of response and respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence, which might be perceived as being 'put at risk' by participatory processes.

Some agencies are committed to the longer term, accompanying affected populations from the emergency to the development stage, with an implied commitment to participation. Others, though, see their role as that of an external relief actor, responding to crisis situations as and when the need emerges.

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Your organisation's mandate will not so much determine *whether* you engage in a participatory process (few or no mandates actually *exclude* participation), but *how* you can do so. Many relief agencies that work in accordance with humanitarian principles in insecure areas strive to involve affected populations in their interventions.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Do my organisational mandate and policies support and/or promote participatory practices? If so, how and for what purpose?
- How does this influence the types of participation that can be put in place?

### 1.4.2 HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES OF IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE

Respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence is central to the mandate and operations of most aid organisations engaged in humanitarian action.

**Impartiality** requires that humanitarian organisations make no distinction between nationality, race, religious belief, class or political opinion. They endeavour to alleviate the suffering, guided solely by needs, giving priority to the most urgent cases. **Independence** necessitates that humanitarian organisations maintain their autonomy so as to act in a manner that is consistent with their principles and with the terms of their mandate—not according to any political agenda.

Having a clear humanitarian mandate is what confers humanitarian organisations with the **legitimacy** needed to engage with affected populations. Respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence, in particular, is what enables aid agencies to have **access** to affected populations on all sides of a conflict and to ensure the **safety** of their personnel and the people they are engaged with.

Among the principal commitments of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* are:

2 'Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.'

3 'Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.'

7 'Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries [sic] in the management of relief aid.'

Are these incompatible in complex emergencies?

One of the key difficulties of participation in a complex emergency is that it can compromise the humanitarian principles of **impartiality** and **independence**, or at least it can be viewed by others as compromising your impartiality and independence, thereby **endangering** not just you and your colleagues but also the very people with whom you wish to engage.

However, participation cannot simply be dismissed for fear of not respecting these humanitarian principles. Rather, they must be taken into account in each decision that you make, including in regard to: the

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donor and the population groups that you choose to cooperate with; the geographic area(s) you select to become involved in; your choice of partners and intermediaries; and the type of participation you opt to engage in. The choices you make can either help to defend your impartiality and independence, or they can constrain you in a way that may force you to compromise on these principles. These decisions require that you have good knowledge of the political situation, local culture and system of social organisation.

The impartiality and independence of your organisation can be key in certain contexts in facilitating the participation of affected populations. In some situations, especially in conflict settings, the population itself will be very careful to be seen by the disputants as impartial, and may be reticent to work with certain organisations, if this entails risks to its own security. (See section on security and protection.)

**In Colombia**, individuals benefiting from, and involved in, 'Plan Colombia', a programme funded by the US administration, are included in a database that is publicly available on the Internet. In zones occupied by guerrilla groups (opposed to Bogotá and thus to US support for the government), people refuse to participate in these activities, fearing rebel reprisals.

Remember, it is not because you think that you are impartial and independent that you will be perceived as such by the local population or other stakeholders (armed factions, local authorities and other organisations)! Transparency and communication in respect of your principles and strategy are thus essential. (See chapter 2.)

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the risks that participation will compromise my impartiality and independence?
- Which strategic choices (such as the type of participation and the stakeholders that I become involved with) will enable me to protect my impartiality and independence while engaging with affected populations?
- How can I ensure that the impartiality and independence of my organisation is recognised and trusted by the affected population and other stakeholders, so that they feel safe in working with us?

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▶ **THE RESPECT OF HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES IS A KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BE TACLED THROUGHOUT THIS HANDBOOK.**

### 1.4.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE, EXPERTISE AND MODE OF OPERATION

Organisational culture and expertise clearly influence the types of programmes that are put in place. Organisations working in the relief field often tend to implement standard protocols, designed to facilitate rapid intervention, and to focus on specific sectors, using particular techniques. The use of such programme techniques makes it very difficult to integrate affected populations concerns, capacities and initiatives into the programme.

While top-down relief programmes might be appropriate temporarily and in certain circumstances, many relief organisations continue to function in this 'emergency' mode even when opportunities to involve the affected population arise.

**In Angola**, humanitarian organisations and donors have treated the situation as an acute emergency rather than as a chronic crisis, thus mainly providing funding for emergency programmes. Some interviewees from aid organisations felt that opportunities for other types of activity were missed due to the momentum of food-aid and emergency health interventions.

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Furthermore, humanitarian actors' mode of operation and institutional culture—particularly those of international aid organisations—are often based on a rapid turnover of technical staff (medical staff, logisticians and water engineers, for example). This is unlikely to promote participation. Meaningful participatory processes are always founded on a level of trust, requiring the identification of common ground and at least some degree of continuity in regard to the interface between the organisation and the population.

In some situations, if your organisation and colleagues do not have adequate knowledge of the population and the context, or lack the expertise to conduct certain interventions, especially participatory ones, your organisation could consider forming a partnership with another aid organisation (including 'development' NGOs) that has been working in the region for a long time, or that is skilled in participatory techniques. This can be a good way to enhance the pertinence of interventions, and to engage more closely with the affected population.

In response to the earthquake that hit **El Salvador** in January 2001, a French emergency NGO (Atlas Logistique), a Salvadorian development NGO (Fundesyram) and an Austrian donor NGO (Horizont 3000), joined forces to provide emergency relief, and then to engage in a shelter reconstruction programme. The marriage of Atlas' technical and logistical expertise, Fundesyram's knowledge of the region and Horizont 3000's funding flexibility made the programme more relevant and efficient, and enhanced community involvement and sustainability.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How does my organisation's mode of operation support or constrain opportunities for participation?
- Is my organisation ready to review some of its practices (the nature of protocols and the length of programmes, for instance) to encourage the participation of affected populations?

#### 1.4.4 HUMAN RESOURCES

In most instances, successful participation is the result of having the right person in the right place at the right time. Engaging in a participatory process, therefore, involves questioning your organisation's human-resource management at several levels.

##### **A Staff skills and experience**

What skills should I look for when recruiting staff and what kind of training should I provide? An understanding of the social sciences and expertise in communication techniques are essential for the implementation of meaningful participatory approaches, especially in volatile and dangerous environments. They are important for expatriate and national staff alike. Also, a certain level of maturity is needed to cope with the demands and challenges associated with participation (including maintaining credibility with local leaders and behaving appropriately).

Finally, the staff profile (age, gender and experience) should be adapted to suit engagement with particular groups. For instance, programmes involving the participation of women in Afghanistan called for the employment of female staff.

##### **B Training**

Is my organisation prepared to train expatriate and national staff to ensure that they have an appropriate mindset and collection of skills to engage in participatory processes?

##### **C Contract length and delegation of responsibilities to national staff**

In the case of international aid organisations, one must ask whether my institution is ready/able to maintain expatriate staff in the operation for longer periods? Is it willing to give greater responsibility to national colleagues who can act as a continuity factor in the humanitarian operation, and serve as a link between the community and the organisation?

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the staff profiles needed to engage successfully in participatory processes? Does my team have the right attitude, skills and experience, and apposite knowledge of the context?
- Are there possibilities to recruit staff with appropriate experience and skills?
- Is my organisation prepared to provide adequate training for participatory processes?
- Is my international aid organisation ready to keep expatriate personnel engaged in humanitarian operations for longer periods? Is it ready to delegate responsibilities to nationals?

### 1.4.5 FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND DONOR POLICIES

Participation requires flexibility in programming and in funding. This is much more difficult if your organisation is dependent on donor resources.

Donor policies and procedures (in regard to timeframes, budgets and regions of intervention, for example) often represent a constraint that is difficult to overcome, especially when competition for funds between organisations is high and limited by time. Some donors restrict participatory processes in humanitarian interventions (by requesting that international organisations monitor the entire process, or by refusing the delegation of activities to local actors, for instance), while others are more reluctant, given the risks and potential delays that participation might engender. But there is always a 'window' for negotiation, as long as your arguments are robust and based on sound knowledge of the situation, rather than on ideology.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Which donors support, promote and/or require participatory processes (via their mandate, policies and procedures)? For what purpose? In regard to those who do not, is there room for negotiation?
- How do the policies of my donor influence the type of participation I can engage in, and the stakeholders that I can work with?

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### 1.4.6 COORDINATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Like it or not, the actions of one organisation will impact on what another one does, wants to do, or can do in the same context. It is extremely important, therefore, to remain informed—by participating in formal and informal coordination mechanisms—and to identify negotiation fora.

Whereas inter-organisation coordination mechanisms often focus on what aid is provided and where, it is also vital to address the question of *how* aid is supplied. It is difficult for an organisation to establish a partnership with a community when another organisation is offering the same assistance for free in the same area.

**In Afghanistan**, community participation is one element of the standard approach defined by organisations working in the area of water and sanitation to facilitate the coordination of activities. It stipulates, for example, that villagers must help with the digging of wells and are responsible for their maintenance. When an organisation dug wells without requiring any input from the affected population, it made it more difficult for other actors to engage in a participatory process with villagers, and compromised the sustainability of the programmes.

In many humanitarian situations, coordination mechanisms and meetings tend to be dominated by international aid organisations, often

excluding national aid organisations and/or structures formed by affected populations (like displaced persons' committees in Colombia and the 'association de sinistrés' – associations of disaster victims in the DRC). Engagement in coordination efforts is an essential way for local actors to participate in the humanitarian initiative, and it can be key to creating bridges between aid organisations and the affected population.

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## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How do the activities of other organisations impact on the way that I can work and engage in participation?
- Am I ready to allocate time to coordination activities and to synchronise my actions and mode of operations with those of other organisations?
- How can humanitarian operations be coordinated in a way that promotes participation?
- How can coordination mechanisms be organised so as to facilitate the participation of local stakeholders (translation, invitation lists and transparency procedures, for example)?

## 1.5 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Designing a strategy for the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action involves analysing the risks and the opportunities that arise from the process, taking into consideration all of the factors discussed above.

Remember that defining a strategy for participation is an ongoing process. These factors, and your understanding of them, will evolve, continuously moulding and fashioning a unique participatory strategy.

Even the most careful analysis of factors affecting participation, however, will not guarantee that a participatory strategy is successful. Two ingredients are essential: communication and transparency.

**Figure 6** Factors affecting the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action





## CHAPTER 2

# The Communication Imperative

### 🕒 Objective of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents the essential ingredients for successful participation and the building of trust between stakeholders:

- two-way communication, entailing the capacity to listen and to share information;
- formal and informal communication tools; and
- transparency throughout the life of the programme.

**Communication** is central to any participation strategy. Participation involves an encounter between individuals, cultures, values, beliefs and skills; its success depends on the ability of those involved to **understand and trust** one another.

Here probably lies the greatest challenge for humanitarian aid organisations, as the contexts in which they work and their modes of operation often create a certain distance between aid workers and affected populations. Building bridges between stakeholders is the first step towards engaging in participation.

#### **'Proximity as an anchoring point for tomorrow's humanitarian aid'<sup>3</sup>**

Some aid workers are concerned that emergency NGOs' attachment to the principles of impartiality and independence, the growing size of projects, the political and security contexts, and the greater focus on the 'technical dimension' to the detriment of the 'human dimension', has led to the

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<sup>3</sup> Chevalier, E., 'Le travail de proximité comme point d'ancrage du travail humanitaire de demain', Cuadernos para el Debate no. 5, (Barcelona: Medicos Sin Fronteras, 2001).

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creation of a certain distance between humanitarian aid workers and affected populations.

White 4x4s, radios, guards, aid workers on short-term contracts moving from one crisis to the next, all form a barrier between those providing and those receiving assistance. Some aid workers have called for the value of **proximity** (to affected populations) to be given new prominence, one of the foundation stones of Médecins Sans Frontières.

This entails developing a relationship with the community—feeling concerned and building trust—even if it requires taking some risks. Such an attitude may indeed necessitate abandoning ‘the protective rituals that regulate the distance’. It also means refusing to act as a substitute for local initiatives; respecting members of the affected population as determinants of their own fate; taking care not to make moral judgements on situations encountered; and being available and willing to listen.

## 2.1 COMMUNICATION: A TWO-WAY PROCESS

In regard to humanitarian action, the balance of power is often skewed between the humanitarian organisation (as an aid provider that retains access to key resources) and the affected population (as a potential aid recipient). But it is difficult to engage in meaningful participation on the basis of hierarchical power relations.

Communication is a **two-way process**: information is both received and transmitted. It involves **information sharing** and **listening**. Re-establishing the **equilibrium** between humanitarian aid organisations and affected populations is, therefore, central to participation; it often comes down to one’s personal approach, mindset and attitude.

### 2.1.1 TRANSMITTING INFORMATION

While not necessarily aware of it, humanitarian aid workers send out many messages, verbal and non-verbal, which create a distance between themselves and the affected population. This makes it difficult for members of the population to engage confidently with aid organisations.

**Non-verbal messages** include: driving fast in big white 4x4 vehicles; using HF or VHF radios loudly; carrying computers; wearing particular clothes; utilising a certain body language; and having guards stationed in front of offices and houses.

*'All we see of NGOs is the dust of their 4x4s, when they drive through our village at full speed.'*

*Afghan villager*

Even the employment of participatory tools can result in members of the affected population feeling ill at ease. People are easily dazzled by high-tech procedures; participants in workshops, focus groups or meetings may be embarrassed to speak or afraid of appearing ignorant or less 'knowledgeable' than aid workers, or they may simply not dare to contradict them out of respect.

**Verbal messages** include: differences in language and accent; the use of technical phrases and acronyms; and the tone of voice. Humanitarian jargon includes terms that imply a certain amount of condescension towards the affected population and local stakeholders, such as 'beneficiaries', 'the locals' and 'going down to the field'.

Of course, it is very difficult to alter many of these tendencies. The first step, though, is to become aware of what can generate distance, and what can lead to the construction of bridges.

▶ **Simplicity** and **humility** are essential to creating space for communication and participation. Other ways of building bridges and opening doors include:

- **listening**, but also **providing information** on oneself, even personal facts. People relate more easily to individuals they can identify with;
- **adapting one's behaviour** to the local context and customs, since this can help to generate mutual respect;
- adopting **traditional forms of dialogue and participation**;
- telling (culturally appropriate) **jokes** and reciting **anecdotes**;
- **embracing error**: do not be afraid to recognise your mistakes, or *faux pas*. They can offer an opportunity to enter into dialogue and to assess how errors are made and how they can be avoided in future.

Wearing the *tchador* (veil) and exercising a certain level of restraint in the presence of men may be hard for expatriate women to tolerate when working in **Afghanistan**, yet they are essential to gaining the respect of one's Afghan colleagues, members of the community and local leaders.

'I have observed you when you use your calendar chart. I don't feel very comfortable with that tool. Please ask me questions directly, and I will explain to you everything that is happening on my farm.'

Guinean farmer<sup>4</sup>

⚠ Be careful to avoid misunderstanding when working through a **translator**. Nuances associated with certain terms can easily be lost or distorted!

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<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Boulier, F., 'La diversité des stratégies paysannes dans la zone de Koba (Guinée)', in Delville, L. et al (eds), *Les Enquêtes Participatives en Débat*, (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

## 2.1.2 LISTENING

Listening skills are essential to engaging in meaningful communication and participation. Many participatory techniques, if not employed carefully, result in simple information extraction exercises, where field workers, preoccupied with their own learning curve, unconsciously select or interpret information according to their own interests and level of awareness.

One can ask oneself questions like:

- am I really listening to the other person's concerns and ideas, or am I using participatory techniques to advance my own agenda or to validate decisions that I have already made?
- Am I ready and able to hear different points of view, and am I granting the other party enough space to express his/herself?
- Am I approachable enough that people feel free to speak openly and frankly to me?

Research carried out in **Sri Lanka** showed that good intentions can be misunderstood. Aid recipients can view supposed beneficial and voluntary measures as burdensome and obligatory. Civilians make active choices and their willingness to engage in participatory projects is probably influenced by perceptions of the potential impact that they will have on their wellbeing.

▶ A few tips on how to enhance one's listening skills:

- **sit down;**
- do not be afraid to remain **silent;**
- **listen with your eyes:** looking at people while they talk enhances their confidence and helps you to listen;
- **'pass the pen'** or **'handover the stick'** in brainstorming exercises; this can help people to express themselves;
- in group discussions, **pay attention to those who remain silent;** try to include them by using your eyes to invite them to speak out, or by asking them questions; and

- feel free to rephrase what has been said in order to **make sure that you have understood the point correctly.**

Again, **humility** and **open-mindedness** are important to listening and truly comprehending people's concerns and ideas.

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## 2.1.3 EXCHANGE AND NEGOTIATION

*'Solutions to problems are not the product of a consensus, but of a negotiation between the various groups . . . The wealth of solutions is found in their diversity rather than in their uniformity.'*<sup>5</sup>

Communication is the exchange of ideas, which involves negotiation in decision making. To listen and to understand each other, with mutual respect, requires flexibility and adaptability.

One can ask oneself questions such as:

- am I able to review my priorities and objectives according to what members of the affected population say and propose?
- am I able to explain my position in a way that is understandable to them and does not hinder dialogue?

Key to communication is having a mindset that is conducive to dialogue and mutual respect. But communication also means taking opportunities as they arise to engage with people, listening to them and learning from them, or creating conditions conducive to discussion and swapping ideas. A number of guidelines and tips are presented in the following section.

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<sup>5</sup> Guèye, B., 'La Methode active de recherche et de planification participative (MARPP): acquis, limites et défis actuels', in Delville, L. et al (eds), Les Enquêtes Participatives en Débat, (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Do the messages that my team and I transmit, verbal and non-verbal, serve to establish a relationship of trust between equals, or do they create a distance between us (the affected population and the team)?
- Is our attitude and mindset favourable to building trust?
- Am I really listening?
- Am I flexible and do I leave enough space to consider openly the concerns and propositions raised by members of the affected population?

## 2.2 TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION

### 2.2.1 INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

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Opportunities to engage with affected populations via 'casual' or informal means of communication are often missed. Yet, they constitute a rich source of exchange, which can complement formal events like focus groups and community assemblies. They include:

- stopping at the bar or tea house;
- going to the market and speaking with people in the street;
- attending public events, such as religious ceremonies and village gatherings;
- taking advantage of minor incidents. Fixing a flat tyre or repairing a car, for instance, can lead to an informal congregation;
- speaking with the driver and with cooks or waiters/waitresses in restaurants, for example;
- stopping by the road and talking with farmers in fields or with herders at water points.

In many situations, if you start to converse with one or two people, it is likely that others will join in, and that a focus group will take shape spontaneously.

It is important, therefore, to take the time to speak informally with people, and to be ready to seize opportunities as they manifest.

▶ Below are a few tips for such situations:

- try to **be aware of who is partaking** in the conversation; if you do not know, be careful when addressing topics that may be sensitive;

- **visual supports**, such as maps and graphs, can often help to illustrate topics, and can help people to express themselves. In such circumstances, **use what you find** on the spot, including sticks, stones, sand and drawings on the ground;
- **let yourself be 'carried away' by the conversation**, do not try to control or direct it, as you may end up hearing what you already know or what you want to hear. 'Erase' yourself, so that people have the space to articulate themselves freely, and to put ideas on the table as they occur to them.

### 2.2.2 FORMAL COMMUNICATION

Formal means of communication include:

- interviews;
- formal focus groups;
- traditional assemblies, such as *shuras* (Afghanistan), *cabildos* (congresses of indigenous peoples in Latin America) and *l'Arbre à palabres* (the tree under which village meetings and debates take place in Africa); and
- discussion with targeted audiences like women's groups and children's focus groups.

Remember that group sessions create **extremely formal** social contexts, within which freedom of speech is not equal, but, instead, reflects power inequalities. Furthermore, 'as a public event, they encourage the expression of what is general and normative to the detriment of what is specific and real'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Delville, L. Mathieu, M. and Sellamna, N., 'Living up to Ambitions: For a More Rigorous Practice of Participatory Appraisals and Enquiries', Scientific Directorate working paper no. 28, (Paris: GRET, 2001).

Consequently, it is important to be aware of social and political dynamics among participants. **Triangulation** of information, whereby you verify information collected by one means through another means, is also essential. This entails, for instance, cross-checking information gathered during a focus group with that gathered in different groups or through interviews with key informants.

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Most of the tools presented in this handbook are collective exercises. Although each will differ in terms of objectives and participants, a number of **basic principles and general guidelines** can be defined, which are detailed in the table below. They are presented in the form of **questions, which one should ask oneself when preparing for any formal group session.**

Organisation of a formal group session is a difficult undertaking, which is not improvised on the spot. It is important to **prepare yourself**, to make sure that the methods used, the objectives, the choice of participants and the location are adapted to the issue to be discussed.

In order to prepare for a group exercise or session, it is necessary already to have some knowledge of the local context. This can require collecting preliminary data through, for example, key informants, observations and informal discussions.

In particular, it is important to have basic information on **security and protection** matters, to ensure that you do not put participants or members of your team at risk when conducting group sessions, to be aware of local political and social dynamics, and to avoid **excluding** or **marginalising** individuals or groups of people. This is crucial to making certain that you are not compromising your **independence** and **impartiality**, or the perception of your independence and impartiality, by carrying out exercises with certain participants, or in particular areas.



Table 3 Planning a focus group

Questions	Warnings	Tips
<p><b>What is the objective of the exercise?</b></p> <p>What information needs to be gathered/shared?</p> <p>What do I already know about the subject?</p> <p>Do decisions need to be taken and what do they entail?</p>	<p>Some subjects/objectives can be sensitive.</p> <p>Does the subject risk creating tension between individuals or groups?</p> <p>Can I put individuals at risk or marginalise them by discussing certain topics?</p> <p>Are participants likely to remain silent or to stop partaking in a process if I bring up particular issues?</p>	<p>Collect preliminary information on issues related to the topic before engaging in the exercise.</p> <p>Clarify the objective of the exercise with participants, but be prepared for the unexpected (such as complaints or new ideas).</p> <p><b>WHY?</b></p>
<p><b>Who will participate?</b></p> <p>Should separate discussions be held with different constituencies (based on gender, socio-economic class and ethnic group, for instance)? Or should they be mixed? What is the balance?</p> <p>How many people should attend?</p>	<p>Mixed focus groups can <i>de facto</i> exclude minorities or 'voiceless' groups that might not be willing or able to speak out in a public arena.</p> <p>The presence of local leaders or influential individuals might discourage others to speak.</p> <p>Gathering people together from opposing groups can aggravate tensions.</p> <p>If there are too many participants it becomes difficult to facilitate the discussion.</p>	<p>Carry out a basic stakeholder analysis, and have at least fundamental knowledge of the local culture and social dynamics before conducting the exercise.</p> <p>Draw on your own experience, or ask those who have experience of collective discussion with the population for advice, so as to be aware of what group composition may be most appropriate.</p> <p><b>WHO?</b></p>

**Table 3** Planning a focus group *continued*

Questions	Warnings	Tips
<p><b>Who should facilitate?</b></p> <p>Should I facilitate the discussion? Do I need a translator or a local facilitator? With what profile?</p> <p>Should I employ traditional facilitation mechanisms (open floor or the use of local leaders as facilitators, for example)?</p>	<p>The profile of the facilitator will influence the discussion.</p> <p>Be careful to choose someone of appropriate gender, origin (including ethnic group) and age, and with the right experience.</p> <p>Make sure that you or your translator can speak the local language or dialect well enough to understand nuances and to avoid misunderstanding.</p>	<p>If you are facilitating, do not be afraid to 'erase' yourself, so that people feel comfortable expressing ideas as they occur to them.</p> <p>If you are not facilitating, take advantage of this opportunity to sit back and listen.</p> <p>Be sure to give the floor to individuals who are more reluctant to speak.</p>
<p><b>Where should the discussion be held?</b></p> <p>In a place where local people gather?</p> <p>In a family home?</p> <p>In my organisation's compound?</p> <p>In the field?</p> <p>At a water point?</p> <p>At a traditional meeting point (such as in a community house in Latin America)?</p>	<p>Be careful when choosing the gathering place, as it can be culturally, socially and/or politically 'loaded'.</p> <p>Discussions held in the home of the chief can discourage dissent and create a very formal context.</p> <p>The choice of place can affect the population's perception of your independence and impartiality.</p> <p>For reasons of security and anonymity, it may be necessary to gather in a discreet location.</p>	<p>Collect information beforehand (through key informants, visits and informal discussions, for instance) on where might be an appropriate place to hold the meeting and why (pros and cons).</p>

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WHO?

WHERE?

Table 3 Planning a focus group continued

Questions	Warnings	Tips
<p><b>When should the discussion be held?</b></p> <p>On which day?</p> <p>At what time of day?</p> <p>How long should it last?</p>	<p>Be careful not to plan sessions when all or some of the participants are unavailable, as this can exclude key groups and/or individuals. For example: during religious holidays/events; when labour demands are high or just after labour-intensive activities; at meal times or while food is being prepared; or when the demands on women are high in regard to childcare.</p>	<p>Collect information on activity times, labour patterns and constraints on time and transportation, through informal gatherings and discussions with key informants.</p> <p>When planning a session, allow time for local practices and customs (such as people arriving late, introductory speeches and meal times and breaks).</p> <p><b>WHEN?</b></p>
<p><b>What tools and resources do I need to carry out the exercise successfully?</b></p> <p>Do I require pens and coloured cards, for instance?</p> <p>Can I make use of local materials like sticks, stones and grass?</p> <p>Should I arrange food and drink for the participants?</p> <p>Do I need to organise transportation?</p>	<p>Be careful to use methods that are adapted to the needs of illiterate groups and individuals. Much can be done with maps and drawings on the ground, for example.</p> <p>Be careful when using sophisticated elements, such as videos. Although they can stimulate interest, in some circumstances, they can embarrass people.</p>	<p>Be prepared: do not expect to find everything on site. But do not hesitate to use local tools and materials and communication techniques.</p> <p>Despite all of your preparation, remain casual and impulsive, as excessively formal conditions are not conducive to spontaneity and to free expression.</p> <p>Allow yourself to be welcomed in accordance with local custom. Do not worry if things do not go according to plan!</p> <p><b>HOW?</b></p>

Once you have prepared the focus group, the next step is to make it happen! Below are some guidance notes on how to run a focus group.

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**Table 4** How to run a focus group

<b>Step 1</b> Make sure you invite all the participants
<b>Step 2</b> Ask everyone to introduce themselves
<b>Step 3</b> Designate a facilitator
<b>Step 4</b> Clarify the objectives of the focus group
<b>Step 5</b> Don't hesitate to vary the group set-up (plenary to working group sessions and vice versa) as the discussion evolves
<b>Step 6</b> Summarise the discussion and take a decision

**Table 5** A few rules

<b>Rule 1</b> Make sure all participants are on board and are able to follow the discussion
<b>Rule 2</b> Keep the discussion to the point. Try not to get too side-tracked, however ...
<b>Rule 3</b> ... remain open! If participants' main concerns lie outside the stated objectives, and if other important issues arise, do not be afraid to stray slightly from the planned
<b>Rule 4</b> Keep an eye on the clock and ensure that all participants have a chance to speak and share their ideas
<b>Rule 5</b> Make the best use of the time you have – use it effectively and appropriately
<b>Remember</b> Rules are made to help you, not to paralyse a process!
When you engage in a participatory process, you may know where you are starting from, however it is unusual to know where you will end up!

### 2.2.3 LET YOURSELF BE SURPRISED

Whether you engage in formal or informal communication, be open to what can happen. You may be surprised by what people have to say and by ideas that surface.

But remember that communication is a two-way process, requiring that all parties involved get to know one another. Humanitarian aid workers tend to focus their efforts on understanding the affected population, often omitting to explain who they are, what they do and why. Yet transparency is essential for successful communication, negotiation and participation.

1

## 2.3 TRANSPARENCY: A PREREQUISITE FOR TRUST

People will only engage meaningfully with individuals or institutions that they believe they can trust. But can one have faith in the unknown?

In many instances, aid actors do not realise how frustrating their actions and interactions are for members of the affected population for whom they may be incomprehensible. White land cruisers come and go, notes are taken, questionnaires filled in, lists drawn up, and triangulation exercises carried out, while the population, lacking explanation, wonders why and for whose benefit.

Elucidating why one is here, how one works and what constraints one faces, can go a long way towards establishing a climate of trust, and generating the will to work together. Failure to clarify these factors, can create a sense of suspicion, especially since affected populations, which have been through difficult or traumatic events, look for people who they can count on and trust.

### 2.3.1 EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU WORK

#### **Clarify your organisation's mandate and explain why you are here**

1 Explain the history, mandate and work of your organisation. Be precise in presenting your guiding principles. Provide information about yourself, and do not hesitate to offer personal details (such as about your family). People have greater confidence in those who they can identify with.

Participants in a workshop organised by DIOBASS (a discussion forum for Congolese NGOs, in **Eastern DRC**) requested that international organisations clarify their mandates for Congolese NGOs and the affected population.

Relate the above to the reason why you are visiting the area. Make sure that people understand the purpose of your visit exactly and that you do not create false expectations. In general, people prefer a good rather than a bad surprise.

#### **Explain how you work**

When engaging with the community, a group of IDPs or refugees, it is very important to clarify as soon as possible how you and your organisation function, the constraints under which you have to operate, and what you can and cannot do.

#### **What you can and cannot do**

After years of encounters with aid organisations, stakeholders in chronically affected areas know how to engage with the aid system, and are prepared to ask for '200%' in order to ensure that '75–100%' of their needs are met. Transparency in regard to what you can and cannot do is the only way to deter this. It is crucial to be clear at the outset and

consistent to the end. Avoid the danger of going beyond your initial objectives without the capacity to do so successfully.

### The procedures involved and the techniques you employ

Certain project procedures, such as procurement, are long drawn out affairs, with cumbersome and administratively demanding tendering arrangements. The affected population might not understand why so much precious time has been lost. It is important to explain these processes before people start to think that you are trying to make money out of their suffering. Involving a community representative in the development of a tender and the responses to it can be a good way of avoiding misunderstanding.

When using particular techniques (like lists, maps, triangulation exercises and focus groups) make sure to explicate, *inter alia*, why you are doing so, how they will be used, and how the information collected will be managed.

### The resource mobilisation process

Explaining the 'bumpy road' between the NGO and the donor, and the different aspects and processes involved, can go a long way towards preventing misunderstanding and maintaining trust.

In an area of **Afghanistan**, an organisation was so sure that it would get funds for a project that the team in the field did not explain that, following the assessment mission, there would be a project writing phase. The population in the affected area thought that the organisation had the means to implement the project and started to mobilise its own contribution in order to participate in it. However, project funding was declined, creating significant tension.

As far as is possible, explain yourself using vocabulary and expressions that are accessible to your audience. Be open to questions, make sure to ask if you have been understood, and do not hesitate to clarify again and again.

### 2.3.2 JOINTLY ESTABLISH THE RULES OF THE GAME

1

#### **Negotiate lines of responsibility on each side**

Participation usually requires that both or all of the parties provide resources for the project (in terms of time, material input and labour, for instance). The nature and the amount of each party's contribution should be clearly stated from the beginning and respected throughout the process. Commitments can be formalised through a contractual arrangement (see chapter 4). In all cases, commitments should be realistic, creating an incentive for participation.

*Without prior discussion, an aid agency determined the type and the level of assistance that it would provide for a shelter construction programme, as well as the contributions to be made by members of the affected population. Suddenly, however, the organisation had to reduce its level of assistance. Instead of negotiating a way out of the problem, it stood steadfast to its position that 'nothing had been promised formally'. Members of the affected population believed that the organisation was trying to cheat them, since they were under the impression that, by providing sand and gravel, they were meeting their commitments. The incident almost resulted in a violent confrontation; the organisation's personnel were expelled from the area.*

#### **Establish jointly, and in advance, problem-solving mechanisms and options for appeal**

In general, people are well aware that things do not always go according to plan. They also know that this can result in difficulties that can

generate tension. Most societies have their own problem-solving mechanisms. Nobody will be surprised to see you trying to establish such mechanisms as part of the programme set-up.

Crucial to these different exercises is transparency of the overall process of which affected populations are a part. Public announcements at general meetings or on local radio, notice boards and leaflets, for instance, are essential communication tools to ensure such transparency and that individuals are aware of the space for participation and the opportunities for feedback. In particular, it is important to choose media that are accessible to all and to avoid discrimination in the dissemination of information (utilise all local languages, for example).

Disseminating information widely will facilitate social control mechanisms, whereby members of the population themselves ensure that programme modalities are respected. This is an effective way of avoiding manipulation or diversion of aid, and discrimination.

During the preparation stage of a food distribution project in northern **Afghanistan**, the ICRC discussed the selection criteria of who was going to be assisted from the affected population with village representatives. Once they were approved, it announced widely, in *shuras* (village assemblies), that, if anyone were found to be cheating in regard to distribution, their entire village would be sanctioned. Village representatives found this to be a fair process. Social pressure within villages was enough to prevent abuse.

### 2.3.3 BE TRANSPARENT THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS

#### **Explain delays and difficulties as they occur**

Given the plight of affected populations, it is important not to increase through poor communication the sense of uncertainty, anxiety, frustration and even betrayal.

1

There are nearly always unforeseen difficulties due, for instance, to delays in acquiring funding, negative donor responses, hold-ups in relation to shipments and deliveries, the supply of incorrect or spoiled goods, and problems associated with the climate and insecurity. Members of the affected population and the structures with which you work will most likely be understanding if the risks and complications have been fully explained to them. What is totally unacceptable is not keeping them informed—an absolute minimum in establishing a relationship of trust.

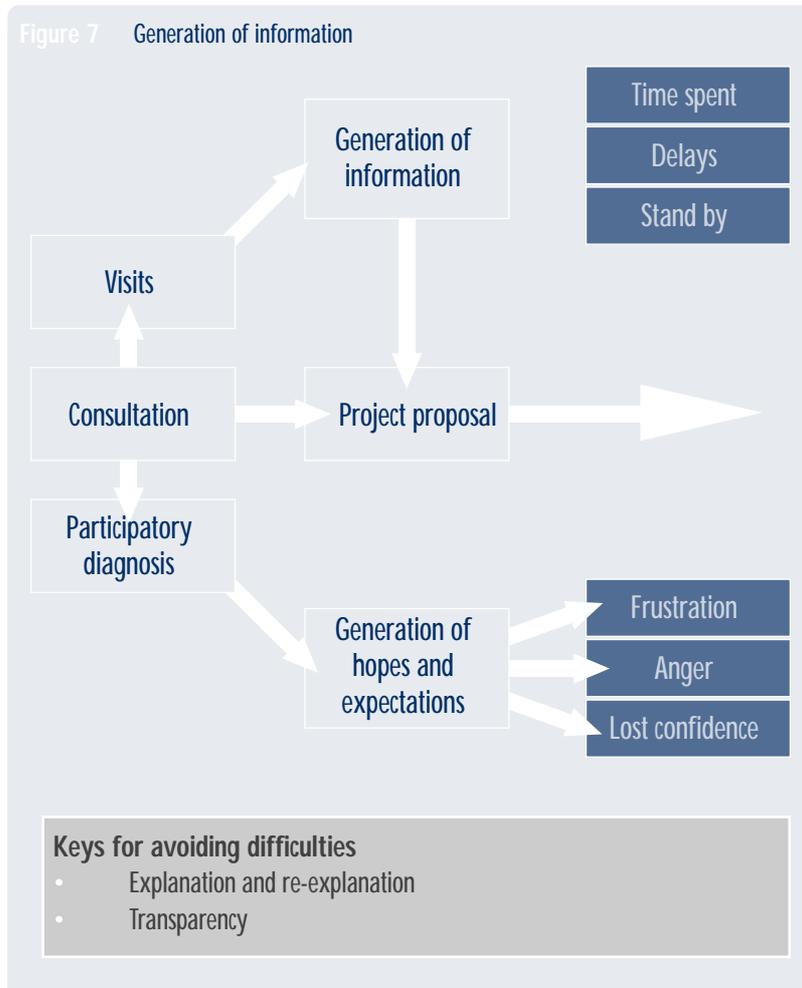
Following large-scale floods in **Southeast Asia**, an organisation tried to set up a programme to rehabilitate flood-control dykes and the irrigation infrastructure. There was conflict between the local governor and the central ministry for irrigation, resulting in a stalemate that prevented the organisation from getting clearance to import some equipment. The level of trust and the commitment of the population to the project were so great that the villagers decided, after a meeting at which the problem was elucidated, to send a delegation to the capital. The matter was resolved rapidly.

### **Be consistent!**

If you say that you will do something, you must do it, otherwise, the trust that the affected population has invested in you will be undermined. In the same way, if you say that you are not able to do something, then you must not do it, or you will lose credibility!

Additionally, if sanctions are threatened when commitments are not respected, as part of the 'rules of the game', they must be applied. Failure to do so could result in loss of credibility and encourage people to cheat, thus creating a disincentive for other potential participants. This is particularly important in situations where cost-recovery mechanisms have been put in place, or in interventions where participants are committed to contributing some financial or human resources.

Figure 7 Generation of information



## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Am I able to elucidate clearly, and in a way that my audience understands, why I am here, how my organisation works, and, among other things, the factors that can affect the programme?
- Have I identified appropriate information-sharing channels and intermediaries to ensure that all relevant people are reached?
- When difficulties arise, am I able to explain them?
- Am I being consistent in regard to what I say and what I can do?
- Does this information sharing contribute to the building and preservation of trust?

## CONCLUSION

Participation in humanitarian action is based on the creation of a space for negotiation and on the establishment of trust, in a context of instability or, at best, uncertainty.

In general, lack of transparency, poor communication and failure to listen to members of the affected population, and associated structures, paralyse programmes, and, in some instances, generate security problems.

Reacting to this communication imperative should be an integral part of disaster-response management – especially in relation to the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action. Effective and inclusive participation is based on the growth of a fragile flower: whose name is mutual trust and confidence.

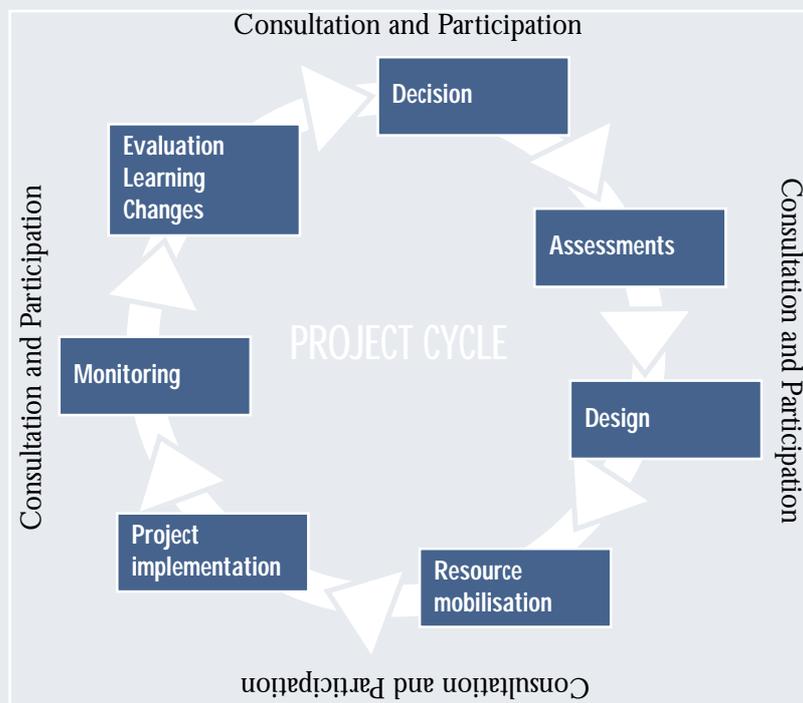
# PART 2

## Participation Throughout the Project Cycle

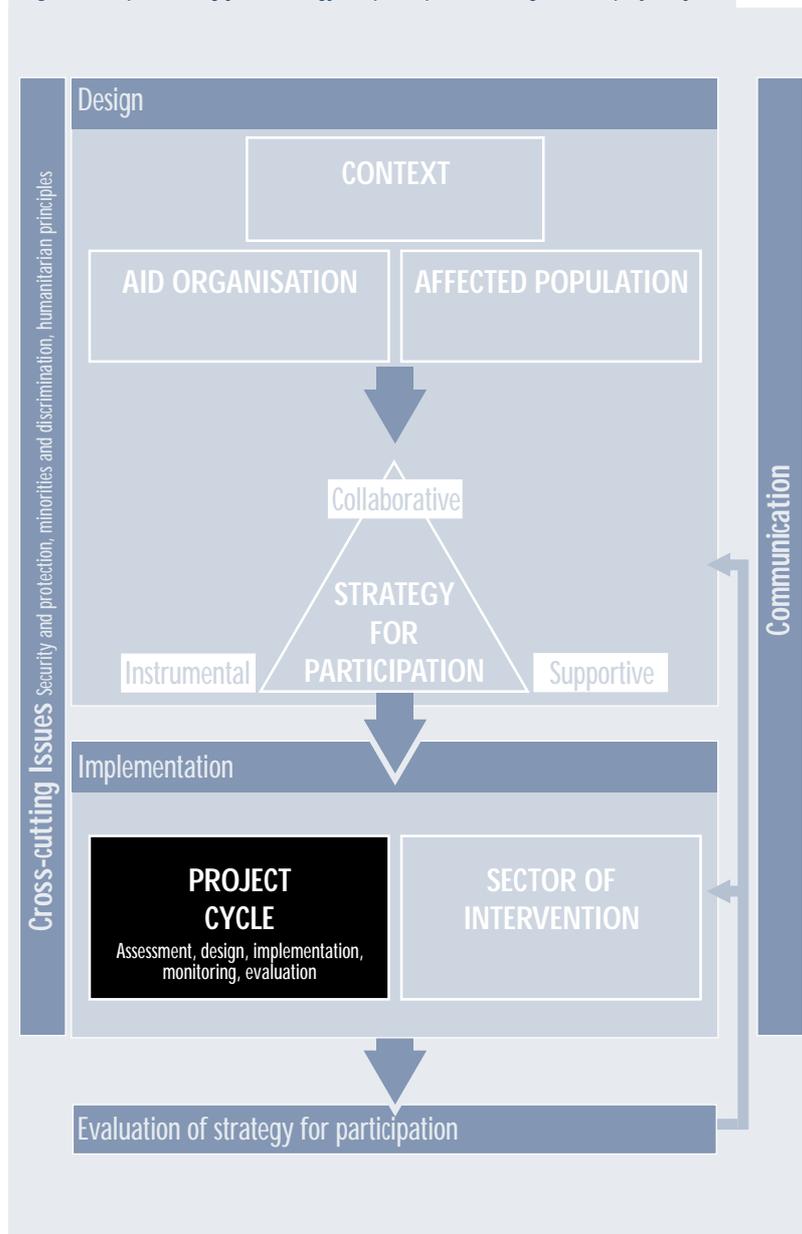
### Objective of Part 2

By the end of Part 2 you should feel comfortable in choosing a series of tools and approaches from a wide range of choices in order to implement your participation strategy throughout the project cycle.

2



**Figure 8** Implementing your strategy for participation throughout the project cycle



## CHAPTER 3

# ASSESSMENT

### 🎯 Objective of Chapter 3

By the end of this chapter you should be familiar with a series of tools and approaches to conduct a participatory assessment, while paying attention to key cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination and minorities, and the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence).

## 3.1 BEFORE YOU BEGIN ...

### 3.1.1 THE PROCESS

Identifying needs, recognising local capacities, pooling demands and delineating constraints and opportunities are primary challenges in the project cycle, as they will inform the programme design. How the assessment is conducted can make the difference between a meaningful programme and a project that is of little interest to the affected population.

Instigating this phase and responding to these challenges in a participatory manner is neither an easy nor an obvious task. The involvement of affected populations is, nevertheless, increasingly seen as not only useful, but also vital.

Essential questions to answer are set out below.

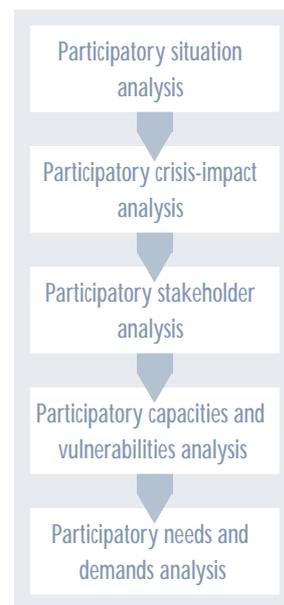
## 2

- What are the key elements of the context? This requires knowledge of the area's history, geography, economy, culture and social anthropology.
- What happened? This entails analysing the crisis and its effects on the local population and its environment.
- Who is who? It is important to know which organisations are present in the zone, as well as the local authorities, stakeholders, and the affected population.
- How is the affected population facing the crisis? Understanding vulnerabilities, capacities and coping mechanisms is essential in the design phase.
- What are the needs and the demands? The needs and demands of whom? It is crucial to comprehend what people require and what factors affect how these needs are transformed into demands.

Various methods and issues relating to participatory assessment are described in this chapter, in the sequence right.

▶ Here are a few tips on using the various tools presented in this chapter.

- Participatory exercises can take **time** in the short term. But, if carried out appropriately, they can save a lot of time and help to avoid or manage difficulties later in the process!
- **Planning** is essential to the success of participatory exercises, so make the necessary adjustments and preparations before you arrive in the field. You can conduct a preliminary field visit, holding group discussions to inform representatives of the population of the exercise's purpose and its modalities.



- These exercises require that you and your team have a **sensitive attitude**. Make sure that the team is well prepared.
- In many situations, people are used to pre-formatted aid responses. Consequently, introducing a participatory process at this stage, which may differ significantly from more common question/answer methods, might at first have a destabilising effect. The initial response might be: what is this new game? What do they want? Be prepared, and, if necessary, be proactive in offering an explanation. (See chapter 2.)
- Transparency is also vital in relation to **security**. If people in the field or the parties to a conflict become suspicious of new and strange work, then problems may be looming. Also, be sensitive to security constraints. Do not take maps with you—for instance, in cases where villagers or the inhabitants of a camp for the displaced have indicated ‘quasi-military information’.
- Do not forget that the objective of these exercises is not only to access a community and to collect data but also **to involve truly local stakeholders in reflections concerning a future project**. Carrying out exercises mechanically, in an extractive way, can strip them of their participatory features. Furthermore, do not be afraid to adapt your tools to suit participants from the affected population, and let individuals express themselves and structure the information that they provide according to their own practical experience and usual forms of dialogue.
- In this chapter, the presented tools are collective exercises, but there are many other ways of gathering information, including **informal means** like observations, visits and discussions. Make sure that you triangulate data garnered through collective exercises with those acquired in other ways.

▶ To get the most out of this phase you should have read Part 1 of the handbook. Hence, an acceptable level of clarity, transparency and understanding should exist between you and your organisation on the one hand, and between you and the affected population and its associated structures on the other. Otherwise, you risk creating false expectations.

### 3.1.2 WHERE TO BE CAREFUL! KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

It is important to be aware of key cross-cutting issues throughout the assessment phase, particularly in relation to the preparation of participatory exercises (such as choice of participants, location and the topics to be addressed).

#### **A Security and protection**

The participation of affected populations in the assessment phase presents specific advantages and risks for the security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of affected populations.

The advantages include the following points.

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- Consulting the affected population on security issues can enhance one's understanding of the situation, facilitate recognition of advance warning signs, and help to avoid potential dangers.
- Involving the affected population in the early phases of a project can contribute to building a relationship of trust—the affected population is more likely to share security information with the aid organisation. The targeting of an organisation's teams and its programmes can, therefore, be prevented or managed by the population.
- Listening to various groups and individuals (women and children, for example) can bring to the fore protection issues that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

The risks include the following points.

- Asking questions about the situation of a particular group (the victims of atrocities, refugees, displaced persons and besieged people, for instance), whether during individual interviews or group meetings, often leads to political considerations. In certain contexts, this can be interpreted as subversive and can put informants and the aid organisation in danger.

- The aid organisation can be suspected of collecting strategic data for the enemy or for a foreign power.
- By providing information, the population shifts from being a victim to being a potential eyewitness.

It is important to be aware of these risks, and to assess how they can be dealt with in the specific context in which you are working.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can the participation of affected populations in the assessment phase enhance their security and that of humanitarian personnel?
- Which means of communication and which participatory assessment methods (focus groups and interviews) can put participants at risk, and how can this be avoided?
- What kind of information can put the lives of informants in jeopardy? Is collecting this type of data necessary?
- Where do you store the information? Should it be kept confidential? How do you guarantee that it remains so?

### **B Discrimination and minorities**

In the assessment phase, there is a danger that certain groups, especially minorities and the marginalised, will be excluded. This can distort the information and the decisions that will inform the programme design, such that these groups may be excluded from the programme as a whole.

When consulting people on their needs or collecting information on local initiatives, for example, it is important to ensure that you obtain data that reflects the situation of all social groups present. Your choice of translator and/or 'cultural bridge' is essential here. When first engaging with a community, aid agencies are generally introduced to local leaders and to influential people; their intermediaries are often educated

individuals hailing from the local elite. It is important, therefore, to go beyond these first contacts, while paying attention not to offend them.

**In Afghanistan**, the traditional venues for exchange and negotiation within communities are the *shura* (Dari) or the *jirga* (Pashtun). These assemblies are very lively events; important issues can be raised in them. Yet, in most instances, they are dominated by a small number of 'white beards' or influential people. Although the aim is not to modify the social balance of power, it is crucial to understand who is speaking, and who would like to talk but does not. It is a very subtle exercise to ensure that the voiceless are given the floor in a way that does not antagonise the traditional elite. It requires observation of who is in the room, certain role-playing skills and a sense of humour. Like other exercises, this kind of meeting has to be prepared well in advance, with a skilful translator or national colleague.

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## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I make sure that minorities and the marginalised are involved in the assessment phase, without stigmatising them further, or offending influential groups or individuals?
- Does my intermediary or national colleague enable me to have access to all groups? If not, how can I gain access? With whom can I interact to secure this access?

### C **Impartiality and independence**

Maintaining your impartiality and independence, and being seen to respect these principles, will depend on who you speak to and engage with, and how you do so. This can require making sure that you are in contact with 'all sides', across political, religious or socio-cultural lines, or that you explicitly refuse to engage with the parties to a conflict, for instance. This means that you have to have a good sense of who is who, and of the political and social dynamics prevalent in the area.

If it is the first time that your organisation has worked in the region, it is fundamental to understand these dynamics before you engage preferentially with any local stakeholder. The choice of your cultural bridge is critical. In some areas, it may be best to work with someone who is not a member of the affected population, someone who is not, and cannot be perceived to be, involved in local socio-political dynamics.

When collecting information, it is necessary to triangulate it with that obtained from various sources, in order to paint as true a representation of the situation as possible. Designing a programme on the basis of biased data risks undermining the perception of independence and impartiality, and potentially creating security problems.

An essential part of respecting these principles is to communicate and to explain them from the outset. Remember always to ask yourself whether your actions are consistent with your principles.

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## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Have I undertaken a stakeholder analysis before interacting in a preferential manner?
- Am I able to engage with various political, religious and social groups? If not, how can I do so?
- Have I communicated my principles to my intermediaries, and do they understand my position? Are my actions in line with these values?

### 3.1.3 FROM CONSULTATION TO SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

The elements presented in this chapter can be used in different ways. One of the key factors to take into account is how you and your organisation view your position in regard to possible approaches to

participation: instrumental; collaborative; and supportive. The main issues to consider are presented below.

**Table 6** Instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participation in the assessment phase

Description	Potential Benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Instrumental</b>			
Participatory data collection and feedback processes	<p>Greater relevance and enhance quality of programme</p> <p>Initiating trust between the organisation and the affected population</p>	Manipulation of information to orientate decision-making (by your organisation, or local stakeholders)	<p>Triangulate information</p> <p>Be aware of the political stakes in relation to the provision of aid</p>
<b>Collaborative</b>			
Assessment carried out jointly by your organisation and a local stakeholder (such as a local NGO or CBO)	<p>Reinforcing local capacities (good in situations where crises are recurrent)</p> <p>Strengthening the link between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)</p> <p>Minimising costs</p> <p>Initiating trust between your organisation and the affected population</p>	Loss of impartiality, depending on whom you collaborate with	Know whom you are working with well. If needed, train local partners in participatory assessment methods

continued ►

**Table 6** Instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participation in the assessment phase *continued*

Description	Potential Benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Supportive</b>			
Assessment conducted by affected population or associated structure	Reinforcing the weight and recognition of local capacities	Risk of low-quality assessment conditioned by habitual behaviour in relation to aid provision or poor local capacity	If needed, train local stakeholders in assessment methods
	Increasing ownership of the programme and motivation to be involved in future stage of the programme	Partiality of needs assessment	Know the context and the people whom you are supporting well
	Initiating trust between your organisation and the affected population		Both sides should together conduct an institutional analysis, putting their strengths and weaknesses on the table

## 3.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

This section is concerned with the need to understand better the socio-cultural, historical, ethnic, geographic and economic components that, together, form the context. Some elements of it are generic, and these are presented here; others are more sector-specific and are dealt with in Part 3.

It is important to distinguish between analysis of the context as it existed prior to the current crisis, and analysis of the crisis itself. Failure to do so, often leads to considerable confusion in regard to comprehending the impact of the disaster, and thus to loss of pertinence in relation to the programme.

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Although a lot of information exists in written form in books, in articles and on the Internet, it is important to solicit the views of the affected population and of key stakeholders. This will allow you to reach a shared understanding with them, and also offer the opportunity to have them validate or correct the 'context picture' that has been created.

### 3.2.1 THE HISTORY

The first challenge is to identify the most relevant events, dates, changes and issues, rather than to get drawn into a sea of detail. In this respect, a focus group, comprising a diverse range of key informants, organised around a small set of well-chosen questions, can be a very powerful instrument.



## Exercise 1 The historical timeline

### Objective

The aim of this exercise is to understand the recent history of the area and its people by identifying the main events that have impacted on the lives of the affected population.

### Participants

A diverse range of participants, particularly in terms of ethnicity, is important to ensuring that gross manipulation is at least partly avoided. Depending on the context, the exercise can be conducted with a mixed group or with separate groups.

**Step 1** You will need a board and some pens, a stick, or other local materials.

**Step 2** Draw a line, and pinpoint two or three events that have occurred in the past 20 years (or more). Position them on the line in chronological order and explain to the participants that the goal is to fill the space with other events that have happened in the time in-between. It may be useful to mark the present.



Below are some fundamental questions that can assist you.

- Which developments have had an important effect on the area in the past five years? Ten years? Twenty years? One hundred years?
- What signs of this can be seen in the surrounding landscape?
- What kind of impact did these events have on the population?

Do not hesitate to highlight positive *and* negative events. Do not forget to 'pass the pen'!

continued ▶

### Exercise 1 The historical timeline continued

**Step 3** Encourage memory recollection based on the information provided above (Step 2). Recall what happened before and after the incident. Do not think twice about letting participants draw, and take note of comments and feelings that manifest.



**Step 4** Ask participants if they feel that the drawing includes all significant events (such as earthquakes, floods, harvests, arrivals of IDPs, fighting and the opening up of boundaries). Ask if they can identify possible cause–effect relationships between developments.

2

⚠ Do not forget that people can be very proud, very ashamed or very suspicious of their history. Indeed, the history of populations is often manipulated, even more so in times of crisis. *To work together we need to know each other.*

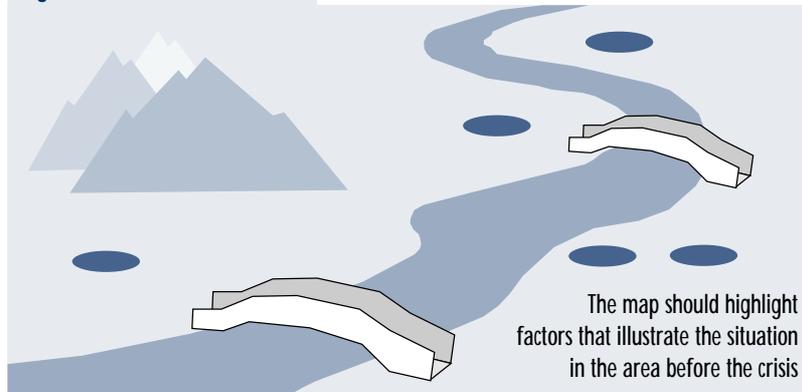
During the exercise, do not hesitate to present factors concerning the history and the geography of your own country. Establishing a kind of ‘double past’, as demonstrated below, can pave the way for building confidence and trust.



### 3.2.2 THE GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The next step is to form a general view of the geographical (mountainous areas, fields and rivers, for instance), social (public buildings and religious sites, for example) and economic (such as infrastructure and production sites) environment that existed **prior to** the crisis. Collective mapping exercises are very useful here.

**Figure 9** The area before the crisis



2



#### Exercise 2 Mapping exercise

##### Objective

The goal is to understand how the affected population views the area in relation to topography (volcanoes, rivers, mountains, lakes), social organisation (schools, town halls, hospitals, health centres), culture (churches, mosques, cemeteries, sacred trees or sites) and economic system (crops, local markets).

##### Participants

The size and the composition of the group will depend on the situation.

continued ▶

**Exercise 2 Mapping exercise** continued

**Step 1** Plan the meeting: invite people to the group session. Offer information about the objective

**Step 2** Before mapping: make sure that participants decide collectively how the map will be drawn and who will be responsible for sketching it

**Step 3** Mapping: ask participants to start by outlining the boundaries of the zone. Be careful if there is any conflict in the area; continue with the environment, infrastructure, and so on. Do not forget to ask questions and to invite participants to take the pen or the stick

**Step 4** After mapping: ask one of the participants to present the map to the group and request that the participants correct it, if necessary

**Step 5** Make sure that you keep a copy of the map or take a picture of it for later use

### 3.2.3 SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY

#### **A The social make-up**

Analysis of a population's social composition necessitates a high degree of sensitivity. In most instances, participatory dialogue on this issue requires the carrying out of significant preparatory work with key stakeholders and informants, as well as with potential operational actors (for example, your team and the NGO/CBO that you wish to work with).

Issues that need to be understood include:

- ethnic composition;
- gender relations;
- relationships between, and the role of, different age groups (knowledge of age distribution is useful here); and
- social hierarchies (based on caste, religion, ethnicity, language and wealth, for instance)

Information can be collected via a literature review, or through interviews with key informants, for example. Including a social anthropologist in your team or someone with relevant experience can be a very useful way of addressing these issues effectively.

#### **B Socio-economic stratification and the economy of the area**

In assessing a situation, it is important to understand the socio-economic stratification of the population. Sophisticated socio-economic tools have been developed for this. In relation to a participatory assessment, it is vital to undertake this exercise in a way that is meaningful to the affected population in general and to the groups involved in the exercise.

There are different and complementary tools available for this exercise.

### Qualitative tools

- **Wealth and vulnerability ranking** This is a key tool for understanding the distribution of wealth in a village or area and its evolution;
- **Identification of the population's resource basket** This tool enables one to comprehend what resources are available to the population and from where they can be obtained. This exercise has to be carried out through disaggregated focus groups (by gender, wealth group, and ethnic group, for instance)
- **Identification of the pillars of survival** This tool allows for proper identification and prioritisation of the population's survival strategies;
- **Analysis of production processes** This facilitates understanding of the different production-process phases and will be very helpful in appraising properly the impact of the crisis on the local economy.



### Exercise 3 Participatory wealth- and vulnerability-ranking exercise

#### Objective

The goal is to understand better the different 'wealth groups' that exist in the affected area. This exercise can help you and your team:

- to identify various wealth groups;
- to comprehend perceptions about wealth and vulnerability;
- to pinpoint poor and vulnerable people;
- to understand the system of ranking that is accepted by the affected population (based on caste and religion, for example) and the criteria for social differentiation; and
- to appreciate each group's means of survival.

In a second phase, this exercise can help in making comparisons between groups and in elaborating the social map of the area.

#### Participants

Make sure that women, elders and young people are represented. Small focus groups are better to avoid discrimination and inequality and to hear the voice of the 'voiceless'.

##### Step 1 List the wealth groups

Wealth groups	1	2	3	4

##### Step 2 List the different resources available to the population

Resources	A	B	C	D	E

##### Step 3 Establish the distribution of resources by wealth groups

Resources \ Wealth groups	1	2	3	4
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				

continued ►

### Exercise 3 Participatory wealth- and vulnerability-ranking exercise continued

**Step 4** Attribute weight to each category using the proportional-piling system (see below for details on how to use proportional piling)

Resources \ Wealth groups	1	2	3	4
A	•	•••	•••	•
B	•••••	•••	•••••	••
C	•••	•	•••••	•••••
D	••••	•	•••	•••••
E	•	•••••	••••	••••

During the exercise, there is normally a lively debate on the number of beans or stones to be attributed to each category. The debate, and the behaviour (body language) that can be observed, often reveal many elements concerning power relations and the perceptions that each group has of itself and of others.



#### Exercise 4 Pillars of survival

##### Objective

The goal is to develop a picture of the different coping strategies of affected populations.

##### Participants

Separate focus groups might need to be organised in order to identify the key elements of specific group survival strategies.

##### Do you need guidance?

The central pillar represents the main survival mechanism, while the 'branches' portray additional strategies - the most important of which are represented by the lower 'branches' (see the example on coping strategies in the food-security chapter).

**Step 1** Explain the rationale behind the pillars of survival. Ask participants to identify groups with different survival strategies, and then to describe them. You can choose to have separate pillars for each group

**Step 2** Through ranking and brainstorming, ask participants to establish a hierarchy of survival pillars

**Step 3** Try to identify possible variations (poor farmers and special groups, for instance). Promote debate and try to comprehend the reasons for people's priorities

It is often interesting to take a disaggregated approach, holding separate working sessions composed of different groups.

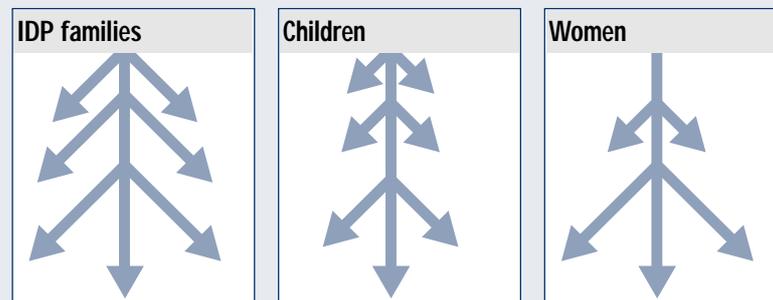
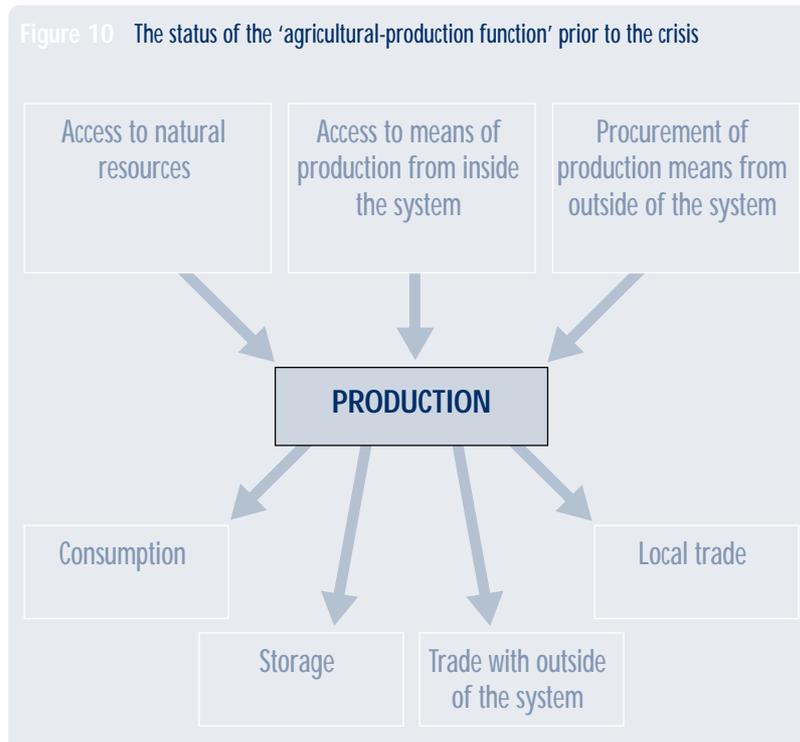


Figure 10 The status of the 'agricultural-production function' prior to the crisis



2

Participatory analysis of economic processes is less problematic than wealth ranking, although it also touches on social and economic relations between different segments of the population, and must, therefore, be carried out with care. Table A presents a way of describing visually the status of agricultural production prior to the crisis. This kind of graph can be drawn during a focus group.

**Exercise 5 Graph on economic processes****Objective**

The goal is to identify inflows and outflows in relation to the means of production, as well as the output of economic activity.

**Participants**

The group can be composed of participants representing various sectors of economic activity. Alternatively, separate groups can be set up differentiated by the kind of economic activity that they are engaged in.

**Step 1** Explain the process and the rationale behind it—that is, to understand the way that the economy functions in order to comprehend, at a later stage, the impact of the crisis

**Step 2** Let people 'brainstorm', while one person maintains an organised record of ideas on a visual support, such as a paperboard

**Step 3** Ask people to identify 'weak points' in the chain

**Step 4** Keep the drawing for use at a later date

**Quantitative tools**

Proportional piling is probably the best tool to quantify issues in a participatory process in a context of limited literacy.

- ▶ This tool can be used for a variety of purposes e.g. each time you need to estimate relative quantities (e.g. estimating needs, post-distribution monitoring, impact evaluation, etc.).



## Exercise 6 Proportional piling

### Objective

This tool has been designed to quantify factors in any given environment, including with those that are illiterate. It helps provide an understanding on proportions and percentages of various items through an enjoyable game. Potential applications of this exercise are very diverse. For example, it enables you to:

- Understand the economic differences in a population;
- Understand the distribution of resources to different socio-economic groups;
- Understand the distribution of various food items in a meal;
- Identify the respective weight of different survival strategies for a group; etc.

### Participants

Make sure that women, elders and young people are represented. Small focus groups are better to avoid discrimination and inequalities and to hear the voice of the 'voiceless'.

**Step 1** Prepare your session. Make sure all participants have been invited. You will need several sets of stones or beans, mussels or dry fruits of similar size and colour, a set of large pieces of paper or a large area of clean land or sand under the shadow of a tree

**Step 2** Present the objective of this exercise and clarify the specific subjects under study

**Step 3** Ask participants to make piles of stones or beans the size they think represent the phenomenon under study. For instance: 55 beans represent the proportion of poor people in the area, 20 of average economic level, 25 of rich people; or 70 stones represent the size of the wheat component of the ration, 20 the beans, 5 the meat, 5 the vegetable

**Step 4** Have a debate on this proportion and try to identify possible variations. If needed organised sub groups to quantify the different options. You can for instance ask: how was it 20 or 5 years ago, last year and have each time a different proportional piling

**Step 5** Record

**Step 6** Final discussion and elaboration of a piece of the assessment

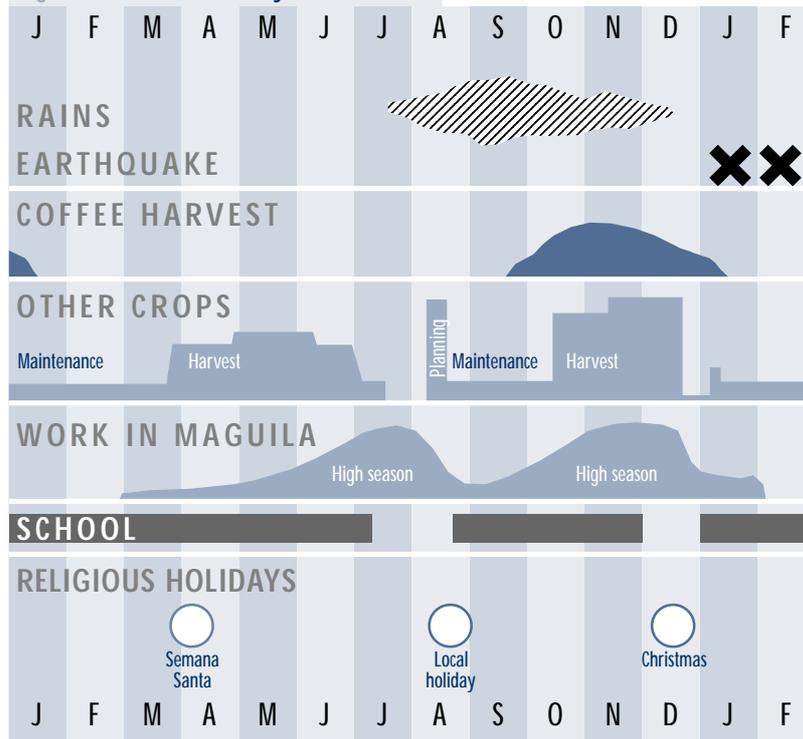
### 3.2.4 TIME: CALENDARS AND SCHEDULE

Drawing up a calendar of activities in relation to seasonal and climatic patterns is also a very interesting exercise, which can yield a significant amount of data.

Compiling a calendar of various productive and non-productive activities in a participatory manner reveals information that is essential for the assessment and for the planning of any initiatives. Unfortunately, this is seldom done. Many setbacks in humanitarian programmes have their origin in the disconnection between aid action and the local activity schedule, including planting, harvesting, and moving flocks and herds from seasonal pastures to other areas.

2

Figure 11 Seasonal activity calendar El Salvador 2000





## Exercise 7 Seasonal activity calendar

### Objective

The goal is to understand the seasonal actions of affected populations and to identify the main events (religious and political proceedings and traditional holidays, for example), activities (such as planting, harvesting and the seasonal migration of livestock), and problems (like blocked roads during the rainy season and snowfall) that occur throughout the year.

### Participants

To fill in the calendar you need a representative from all of the affected population's social groups. Forgetting one group can lead to a skewed understanding of the situation and to errors or omissions in the **programme design**. Several small groups can be useful, so as to understand the specificities of each. It is possible to work with one group if all of the different socio-economic groups are represented and able to speak, and if discrimination of minorities is not too strong.

**Step 1** Planning the session: identify the number of sessions and the groups that will partake in the exercise. Be aware of the situation of minorities and of the risk of discrimination

**Step 2** During the session: discuss with the group which timeframe will be covered (such as one calendar year) and the way that they want to divide it up (into months or weeks, seasonal periods, or holidays, for instance). Make sure that you know how the local calendar relates to the one that you usually use. Ask participants to complete the calendar

**Step 3** After drawing the calendar: ask one person to present it to the other participants and to complete it or to make adjustments, if necessary.

**Step 4** Make sure that you keep a copy of the calendar or take a picture for future reference

Daily schedules are another useful tool for visualising how members of the affected population organise their time. They highlight daily routines, times when people are most busy, or, conversely, when they are more available.

Figure 12 Example of a woman's daily schedule (prepared in Afghanistan)

<b>6am</b>	Wake up. Fetch water.
<b>7am</b>	Care for the children.
<b>8am</b>	Clean the house. Work in the kitchen/garden.
<b>10am</b>	Go to the market to buy food.
<b>12pm</b>	Prepare lunch.
<b>1pm</b>	Men eat lunch.
<b>2pm</b>	Women eat lunch. Clean dishes/kitchen.
<b>4pm</b>	Put wood or fuel in <i>bukhari</i> (heater) to warm water. Bathe children.
<b>6pm</b>	Prepare dinner.
<b>7pm</b>	Put youngest children to bed.
<b>7.30pm</b>	Dinner for men.
<b>8pm</b>	Go to bed. Sleep.

**Exercise 8 The daily schedule****Objective**

The goal is to understand the daily activity patterns of a specified group.

**Participants**

This exercise can be done in small, homogeneous groups (distinguished by gender, age, socio-economic class and profession, for example). It is important to note that people's daily routines vary greatly between groups.

**Step 1** Invite all of the participants, and make sure that they understand the aim of the exercise

**Step 2** Draw a timeline or a table (each column corresponding to a part of the day), spanning the time between when participants wake up and when they go to bed

**Step 3** Ask them to describe their activities throughout the day. You can enquire as to what they did yesterday, for example, or what they do on a 'typical' day

**Step 4** Open the discussion on the participants' daily activities, and, for instance, the constraints that they face during the day. Questions include: do you go to fetch water early in the morning? How far is the nearest water point? How much time do you spend preparing food?

People's schedule can, of course, vary, depending on the season of the year and the time of the week (such as weekends and Fridays in Muslim countries). Hence, it may be necessary to draw up more than one daily schedule.

### 3.2.5 OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS

Various other factors, expected or unexpected, can be part of the situational analysis, including local initiatives, previous experience of aid programmes and participatory approaches.

These may not necessarily constitute a topic for a focus group, but information can be gathered through key informants, observation, or discussion in participatory exercises described above.

 Keep your eyes and your ears open! Be ready to hear or see the unexpected.

## 2

### 3.3 UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS AND ITS EFFECTS

A crisis is an event that can be described in many different ways by different actors. Humanitarian agencies often tend to have a narrow, supply-driven view of the crisis and its impact. One often forgets to take into account the opportunities that arise from it, and the adaptation mechanisms that frequently exist in areas where crises are recurring phenomena. Where aid workers have little knowledge of the context, they tend to neglect in their analysis important elements of the situation prior to the crisis and the crisis itself. It is useful, therefore, to make the effort to engage in a collective exercise to assess the crisis and its effects.

It is also easy to forget that areas are often affected more than once in a person's lifetime. While aid workers, particularly expatriate personnel, are deployed for just a few months, people often have to deal with difficulties and disasters on a regular basis. Consequently, it is essential to see one's actions as something that will be integrated into the affected population's coping mechanisms—as a means of assistance when these processes are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis or when they cannot function properly due to internal or external factors.

Experience shows that it is useful to adopt a two-step approach:

- establish a global picture of the crisis; and
  - go into detail, analysing the crisis in relation to the environment, the local economy, and the population's activity calendar.
- ▶ A series of participatory exercises is presented below, but do not forget that a lot of information can also be collected informally, through, for instance, informal interviews (such as listening to people's anecdotes), observations, and visits.

### 3.3.1 ESTABLISHING THE GLOBAL PICTURE OF THE CRISIS

- ▶ Be open. Our perceptions of the crisis are often very different from those of the affected population, notably concerning its causes.

Listen to the discussion, let people talk, and try to understand their views on the causes of the crisis. In the case of natural disasters, this exercise can also reveal local beliefs and traditions related to the event.

### 3.3.2 GOING INTO DETAIL

Having developed a general description of the crisis, it is possible to discuss in greater detail how it has affected the lives of members of the affected population, and how it is still doing so. At this point, it might be important to establish a different audience, either by enlarging the group or by organising a greater number of specific groups.

Several typical Participatory Rural Appraisal tools are useful here, including site visits, 'transect walks', mapping exercises and elaboration of calendars.



### Exercise 9 Analysing the crisis

#### Objective

The aim of this exercise is to establish and validate collectively the **global picture** of a crisis and its impact on the affected populations.

#### Participants

Mixed focus groups are welcome; minorities, though, have to be present. In certain contexts, specific focus groups for minorities should be set up, especially when the crisis involves conflict or attacks on particular groups. Be careful with cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination, and impartiality). In most instances, you should triangulate collected information by interviewing key informants.

**Step 1** You will need a board and some pens, a stick and the ground, and other local materials

**Step 2** This exercise can be organised around three main factors: Crisis trends in the area; the crisis being analysed; the impact of this crisis.

**Step 3** Invite the affected populations to fill three paperboards (pictures are welcome!)

#### Crisis trends in the area

Types • Frequency  
• Impact of previous crises • Existing prevention or preparatory measures

#### Description of the crisis being analysed

What happened? • When? • What area was affected? • Were there any warnings?

#### Description of its impact

What happened to you? • What happened in the village? • What happened in other affected areas?

**Step 4** Open the debate. Does everybody agree with the points being made? Does the impact of the crisis differ depending on factors like social position, age and gender?

## A The crisis in terms of geographical and social environment

Affected populations benefit from a geographical understanding of the crisis. These exercises are effective participatory tools to help identify simultaneously:

- the geographical impact of the crisis;
- the existing physical constraints on the affected population; and
- the physical restrictions on humanitarian action, such as limited access due to insecurity, destroyed infrastructure, or climatic considerations.

As seen below, the map prepared in section 3.2.2 can be used to highlight changes arising from the crisis. Comparison of maps drawn 'before' and 'after' the crisis provides a rich source of information.

 Be aware of sensitive information, such as the location of landmines and checkpoints. Especially in a conflict context, this information can affect the security of affected populations.

Figure 12 The area before the crisis

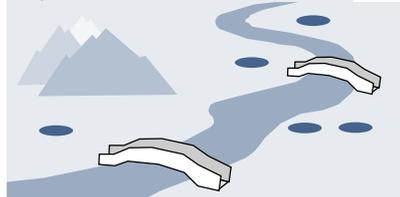
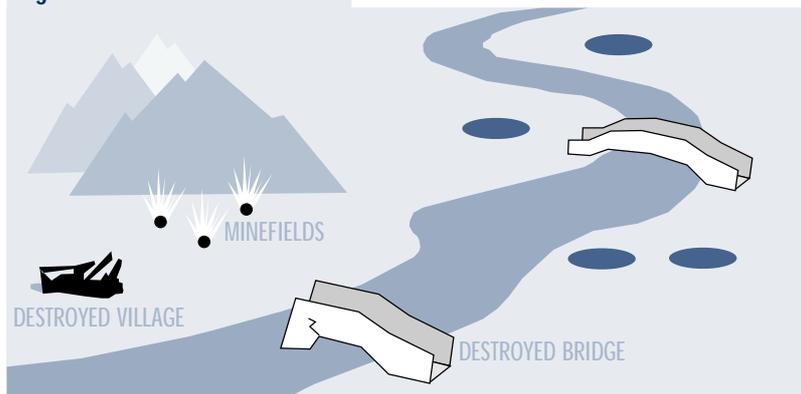
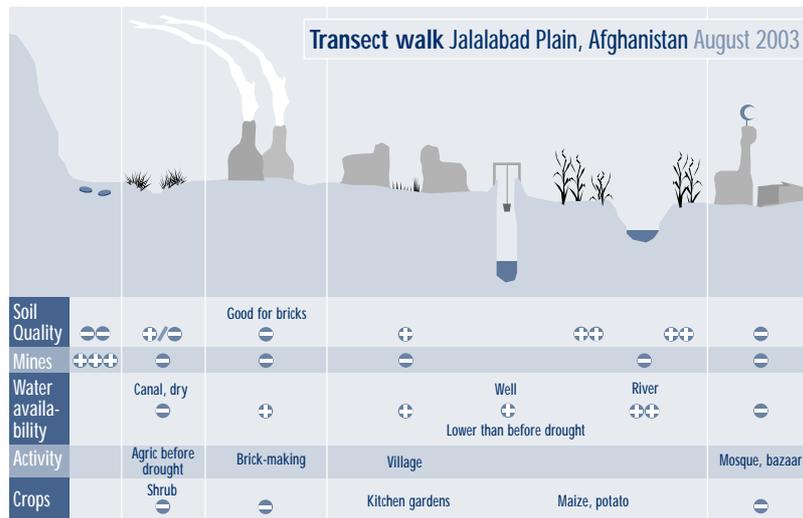


Figure 13 The area after the crisis





2

Another useful tool (to complement maps) is the transect walk, providing a cross-sectional rather than a bird's-eye view of the impact of a crisis. It helps in verifying and qualifying elements on the map, and enables the collection of data that is not marked on the map.



## Exercise 10 The transect walk

### Objective

To establish a joint understanding of various characteristics of the area: the geography, topography, vegetation, agricultural activities, hydrology etc. This is done by walking straight across an area with a group from the affected population, taking notes, and drawing a cross-section of the visited area with participants.

### Participants

Choose a small group. If possible, invite the affected population to choose the group's members. Make sure that a diverse range of people (men and women, farmers and IDPs, for instance) is represented. Do not forget that, in some cultures, walking with a foreigner or 'outsider' can be a source of insecurity, so make sure there are no risks to security before engaging in this exercise.

**Step 1** Plan the walk: choose a guide and identify the logistics, materials and time that you will need

**Step 2** Before the walk: decide collectively on who will do the walk ('the transect walk recorder'). You can ask several persons to do this

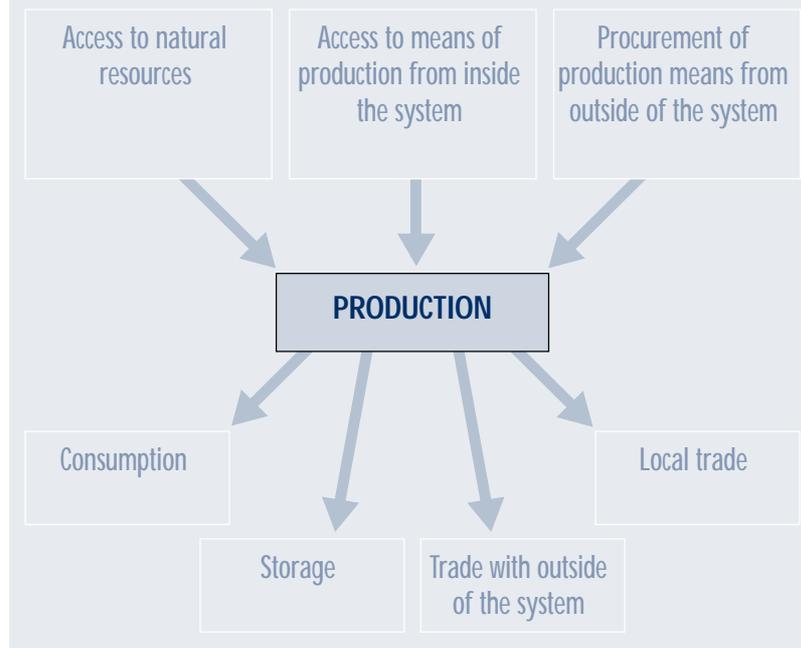
**Step 3** During the walk: stop, ask, observe (at water points, schools, rivers and forests, for example), and discuss what you see.

**Step 4** After the walk: ask the transect walk recorder to present 'the transect' to other participants and to open a discussion on what has been seen

The purpose of conducting a participatory transect walk is to view the affected region through the eyes of the affected population: open your eyes and your ears, walk, ask and generate discussion and adapt your approach if necessary.



Figure 14 The status of the 'agricultural-production function' prior to the crisis



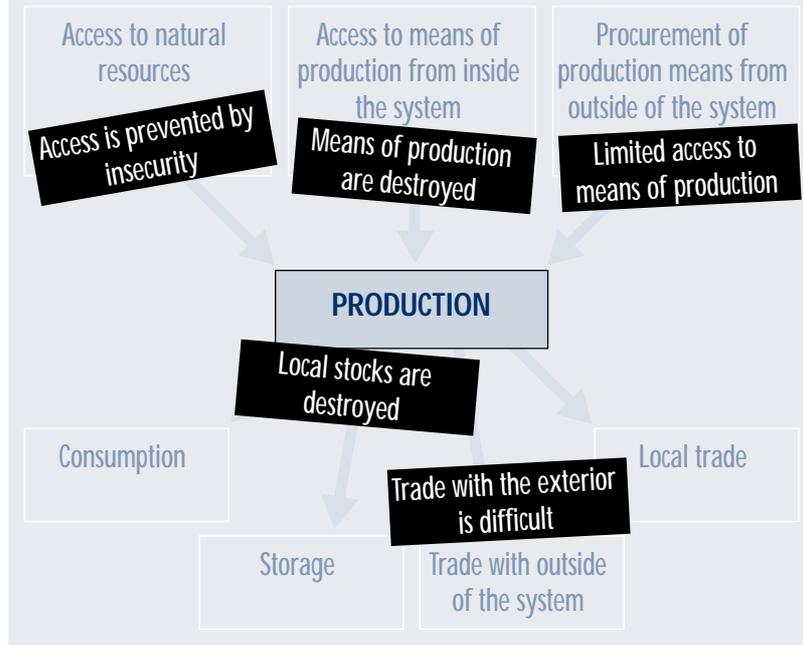
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### **B The crisis and the local economy**

The objective of the following exercise is for the focus group to explain how the crisis has affected production processes. Table A shows agricultural production in normal times, especially before the crisis; Table B shows how the crisis has impacted on agricultural production. Both are easily established in a participatory manner, as indicated in the context analysis.

Another interesting exercise is to compare loss of assets among the various wealth groups that have been identified above, since the impact

Figure 15 The crisis affects the system



2

of the crisis will surely differ between them. This can be done through proportional piling or by conducting a new wealth-ranking exercise.

### C The crisis and time: activity calendars

Situating the crisis in relation to the affected population's activity calendar can highlight important aspects in terms of the impact of the crisis. This can be done in a focus group, taking the calendar that was prepared collectively in section 3.2.3. Ask the group to mark on it crisis-related events, such as the site of floods and massacres.

 **Figure 16** Somalia, the April 1992 war in Baidoa and the Central Sorghum Belt

	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J
<b>SEASONS</b>		GU SEASON							DEHR SEASON			
<b>SORGHUM CROP</b>		Sow		Weed		Harvest		Store con- sume	Sow	Weed	Harvest	
<b>DISASTER</b>		War		Insecurity								
<b>IMPACT</b>		No plantation. Food and seed stocks destroyed or consumed		The few seeds that were sown could not be weeded or taken care of			Yield limited or non-existent	Availability of seed extremely limited				
	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J

Had the war taken place at after the harvest, the impact of the crisis would have been different. This conclusion emerges when such a calendar is established.

2

- ▶ If the crisis has affected people's daily routines and activities, it can also be interesting to compare their daily schedules before and after the crisis.

### 3.4 UNDERSTANDING WHO IS WHO

In a fragmented society, conducting a participatory stakeholder analysis is not a simple, risk-free endeavour. On the contrary, it requires tact and skill. Disaggregating the overall human environment in order to produce an organised typology of different stakeholders and their different agendas is, nevertheless, an important step.

Stakeholders that should be considered include, for example, traditional leaders and political structures, national and local authorities, international NGOs (INGOs) and local NGOs (LNGOs), and the perpetrators of violence (militaries and guerrilla forces, for example). One should not be set on traditional means of categorisation, however, as choosing the wrong stakeholder classification process or being attached to standards can mask the specificities of each context.

- ▶ A socio-anthropological analysis of the area, with a focus on political dynamics, can be useful in yielding important background information prior to a stakeholder analysis.

The stakeholder analysis can be conducted via a relatively easy two-step exercise. Only basic materials are needed, including a board, coloured cards, pencils, or whatever you find on the spot.

- ▶ Remember that these exercises might take time, as power dynamics and issues such as exploitation may be raised.

- ▲ Be careful! These exercises will raise all kinds of questions concerning existing power relationships within a community and between groups, including those pertaining to traditional structures and local authorities. Hence, they must be conducted in a very diplomatic and systematic way.

The choice of participants will depend on the objective of the activity. The presence of leaders is frequently a factor leading to bias. In certain

cases, it is useful to have several groups in order to avoid confrontation. Remember, the aim is to learn about and to understand relationships, not to alter them.

**A Phase 1 List all of the possible stakeholders and describe them**

The main question to explore here is: who are the stakeholders and the parties that played, and most likely will continue to play, a role in this situation and the programme? To answer this question, you can follow the participatory method presented below.

**Exercise 11 Participatory stakeholder analysis: identifying stakeholders and their characteristics****Objective**

The goal is to identify and classify the stakeholders and to construct a picture of the NGOs, institutions and other actors that are present in the zone. It is important to identify elements that aid understanding of who these stakeholders are and how they relate to one another.

**Participants**

Participants should have sufficient knowledge of the various stakeholders to be able to describe them. It might be necessary to convene separate focus groups in order to ensure that you cover the variety of stakeholders, and to triangulate the collected information with interviews and observations.

**Do you need guidance?**

The grid below can help in listing known characteristics and indicators. It can be partly filled during a focus group and completed at a later stage.

**Step 1** Plan your session: identify participants, and collect the materials that are needed, such as pens, paperboards and pictures

**Step 2** Define the boundaries for the exercise. Which area? Which stakeholders? Be sure that everybody is using the same definition of 'stakeholder' or the chosen term

**Step 3** Hold a brainstorming session to identify stakeholders

**Step 4** Ask participants to classify them

**Step 5** Try to fill in the grid. You do not need to fill it with words; you can use images

**Step 6** Begin a debate about the importance of stakeholders and/or the influence that they have over the affected population

The following grid can help in listing the characteristics of stakeholders. It is very useful in identifying the main features of the various actors and stakeholders in a participatory manner. It is probably difficult to fill in this grid all at once, but it plays a useful function in guiding the information collection process. This matrix is an example, of course, which can be adapted to suit the context that you are working in and the information that you will need to gather.

2

Name of actor or stakeholder	Nature	Mandate and stated principles	Origin/history	Nature of relationships with the organisation and constituency	Capacity to deliver	Capacity to be accountable	Capacity to work in crisis situations	Other
	International							
	National							

## **B Phase 2 Describe the interaction between stakeholders**

There are several ways of identifying interaction between stakeholders. Choosing the tool that best meets your needs is thus very important. It will depend on whether you want to understand relations between power and solidarity or between proximity and distance. Four tools are presented below.



## Exercise 12 Interaction diagram

### Objective

The aim is to identify relationships, especially power relationships between stakeholders.

### Participants

Be careful, power relationships can be a sensitive issue. In some contexts, it may be necessary to set up separate focus groups so as to avoid creating tension or even generating conflict between participants. It is also necessary to ensure that you have an impartial, or at least a diverse, view of relationships between stakeholders.

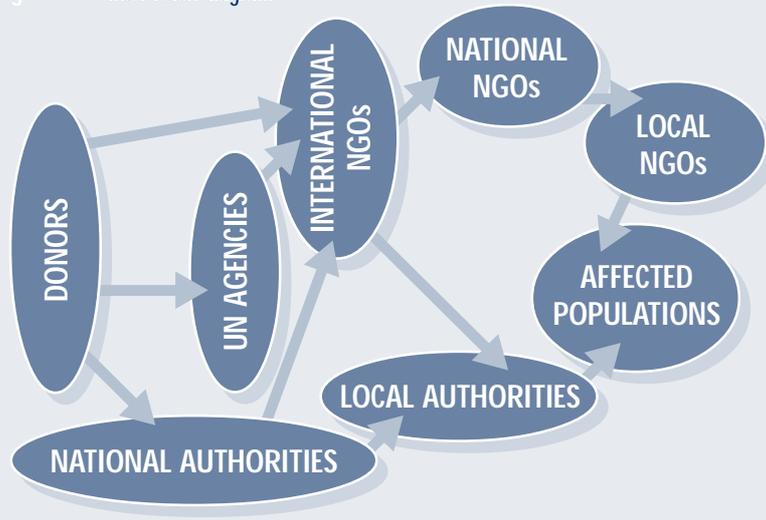
**Step 1** Prepare for your session: you can use a paperboard and some pens. Following this, draw some circles

**Step 2** Ask participants to place the names of stakeholders in the different circles

**Step 3** Ask participants to draw lines between stakeholders, choosing different colours to represent solidarity, power, and other types of relationships. The thickness of the line symbolises the importance of the relationship

**Step 4** Encourage debate to explore the type of relationships that exist between stakeholders and affected populations

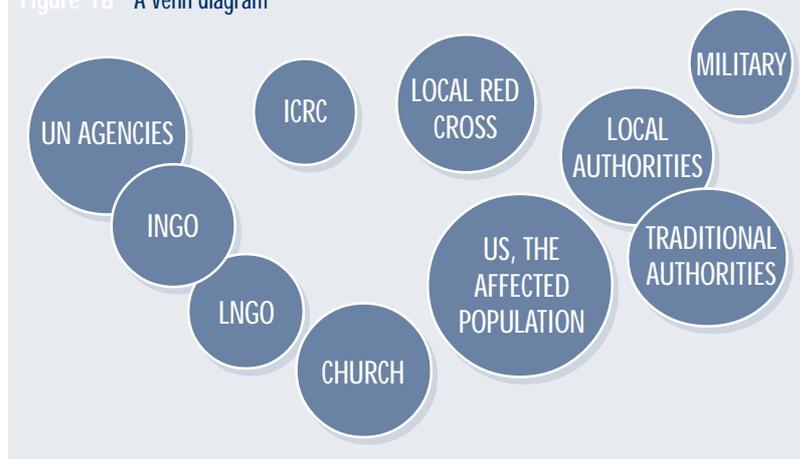
Figure 17 Interaction diagram



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The Venn diagram offers another way of presenting information, which identifies and analyses the level of interaction between stakeholders and between other actors.

Figure 18 A Venn diagram



**Exercise 13 Venn diagram****Objective**

The goal is to represent relationships between stakeholders. This tool can also be used to identify relationships between social groups and to uncover the degree of power within a group.

**Step 1** Preparation work. **Flipchart** you need paper and different coloured marker pens. **Drawing on the ground** you need sticks, grain and small stones. Remember to take a photo of the diagram or to copy the information. **Constructing a collage** you should prepare several circles in different sizes and colours. You will also need glue or tape and a surface to work on.

**Step 2** Make a list of stakeholders/groups. Ask participants to complete and verify it

**Step 3** Draw one or several circles for affected populations and/or sub-groups. Ask participants to place the population in the middle of the paperboard or the circles on the ground

**Step 4** Each stakeholder is placed in one circle.

**A** Ask participants to choose (or to draw) circles depending on the importance of each stakeholder or group. One variation on this exercise is to use small stones, depending on the importance of the stakeholder—zero stones represent an actor of no importance; four stones symbolises one that is very important.

**B** Ask participants to explain the reasons why certain stakeholders or groups are more important than others. Do not hesitate to ask for examples.

**C** Ask participants to position circles according to their experiences. The tighter the relationship is between two entities, the closer they should be to each other.

**D** The group can move the circles until agreement is reached

Yet another way of illustrating relationships between stakeholders is to carry out a 'proximity–distance' analysis.



### Exercise 14 Proximity–distance analysis

#### Objective

The aim is to establish the degree of proximity between stakeholders and affected populations.

#### Participants

Again, make sure that there is no potential for creating tension between participants, yet the composition of the group should be diverse enough to allow for a rich discussion.

2

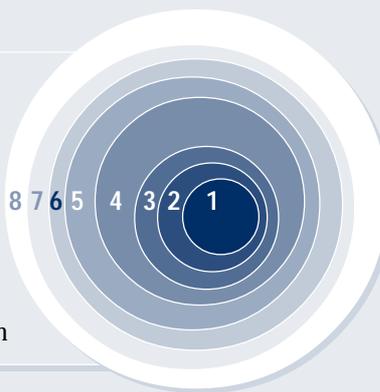
**Step 1** You do not need much time for preparation

**Step 2** This analysis can occur easily by drawing concentric circles. The circle placed at the centre is assigned to the affected population, or to the group that the participants represent

**Step 3** Participants then assign one type of stakeholder to the following circle and continue until all stakeholders have been allocated a circle. Do not forget to explore the reasons behind each choice. For instance, why did you insert this stakeholder and not another one? What is the difference between these two actors that made you choose one over the other?

For example,

- 1 Affected population
- 2 Traditional associations
- 3 ...
- 4 ...
- 5 Local NGO
- 6 International NGO
- 7 International organisation



### 3.5 PARTICIPATORY VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

An essential step in regard to participatory approaches to humanitarian action is recognition of local capacities. Failure to do so encourages top-down approaches, which either overlook or undermine existing capacity. Furthermore, designing a programme without considering what can be done or what is already being done locally can either lead to programmes that are of little interest to the population (especially if they overlap with local initiatives or contradict local practice) or that generate feelings of mistrust or frustration.

One way to make sure that a programme can support, rather than undermine, local capacity is to conduct a Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (CVA).

2



#### Exercise 15 Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis

##### Objective

The goal is to get the group to understand its own weaknesses, vulnerabilities and capacities. Key questions include the following.

- What are the vulnerabilities of each group? Why do these groups become vulnerable?
- What are the capacities of each group? How are they employed today?
- How can the programme take account of these capacities and vulnerabilities?

It can also be a powerful participatory exercise for:

- improving the targeting and prioritisation of needs; and
- better understanding risks and coping strategies, disaggregated by group (according to gender, age and ethnicity, for example).

continued ►

### Exercise 15 Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis *continued*

#### Participants

The composition of the focus groups is a central issue. In situations where it is possible to have mixed groups, it is important to ensure that women and children have the space to express themselves. In some cases, it is more fitting to have separate focus groups.

Depending on the social situation, it may also be appropriate to divide the data into different categories (like caste and socio-economic group) and to organise focus groups accordingly. This is a real challenge in relation to participatory techniques, as often, due to social pressure within the group, affected populations tend to see or to present themselves as a homogenous group of affected persons.

It is important to take into account divisions on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste or religion, because they can weaken the social fabric, increasing a group's level of vulnerability.

#### Do you need guidance?

The following grid can help in listing vulnerabilities and capacities. It is an example; do not hesitate to adapt it to specific needs.

**Step 1** Ask participants to complete a list of subjects. Topics to be addressed are those written in the left-hand column. They can be tackled in a different order. They are to be presented at the end of the discussion in the tables below

**Step 2** Establish (with participants) a typology of groups. It is important to disaggregate information at least by gender and age, since the roles and opportunities extended to each of these categories—and hence their vulnerabilities and capacities—are often very different

**Step 3** Construct a matrix

*continued* ▶

**Exercise 15 Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis** continued

**Step 4** Ask the group to complete the matrix. Remember that a group's social organisation is usually disrupted in times of crisis, generating chaos and opportunities for social change. Discussion on these changes can provide a very interesting 'entry point' for a gender-sensitive participatory analysis—for example, on capacities and vulnerabilities

**Step 5** Ask the group to explain the vulnerabilities and capacities that have been listed. This matrix can also trigger further discussion

**Table 7** Capacities and vulnerabilities matrix

Physical/material	Capabilities			Vulnerabilities		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
Health and disability						
Livelihoods/vocational skills						
Food supply						
Water supply						
Staple crops						
Livestock						
Access to markets						
Transport						
Housing						
Technologies						
Access to capital or other assets						
Relative poverty and wealth						
Features of land, climate and environment						
Social/organisational	Capabilities			Vulnerabilities		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
Family structures						
Kinship groups/clans						
Formal social and political organisations						
Informal social gatherings						
Divisions by						
gender						
race						
ethnicity						
class						
caste						
religion						
Social capital (systems of support & power)						
Education						
Systems for distributing goods and services						
Motivational/attitudinal	Capabilities			Vulnerabilities		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
Psychosocial profile						
History of crisis						
Expectation of emergency relief						
Existing coping strategy						
Cultural and psychological factors						
Change in power structures and relations						

- ▶ To prepare for this exercise, it may be useful to access resources that may be available in-country: the World Food Programme (WFP)'s Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit; the World Health Organisation's Vulnerability Assessment; the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA-FAO); and Oxfam's Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis.

## 3.6 UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND DEMANDS

### 3.6.1 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

2

The identification of needs should be the final outcome of all of the steps that have been developed above. If these steps have been taken successfully, it should be easier to identify needs.



A focus group can be held with participants who have contributed to the previous exercises, where the results are brought together in order to identify collectively the main requirements of the affected population.

▲ This phase remains one of the most difficult, since it is most prone to manipulation, to the presentation of 'shopping lists', or to the imposition of our own appraisal of needs and demands.

As a result, two questions must be addressed.

- How are needs transformed into demands?
- Whose needs and whose demands are we identifying?

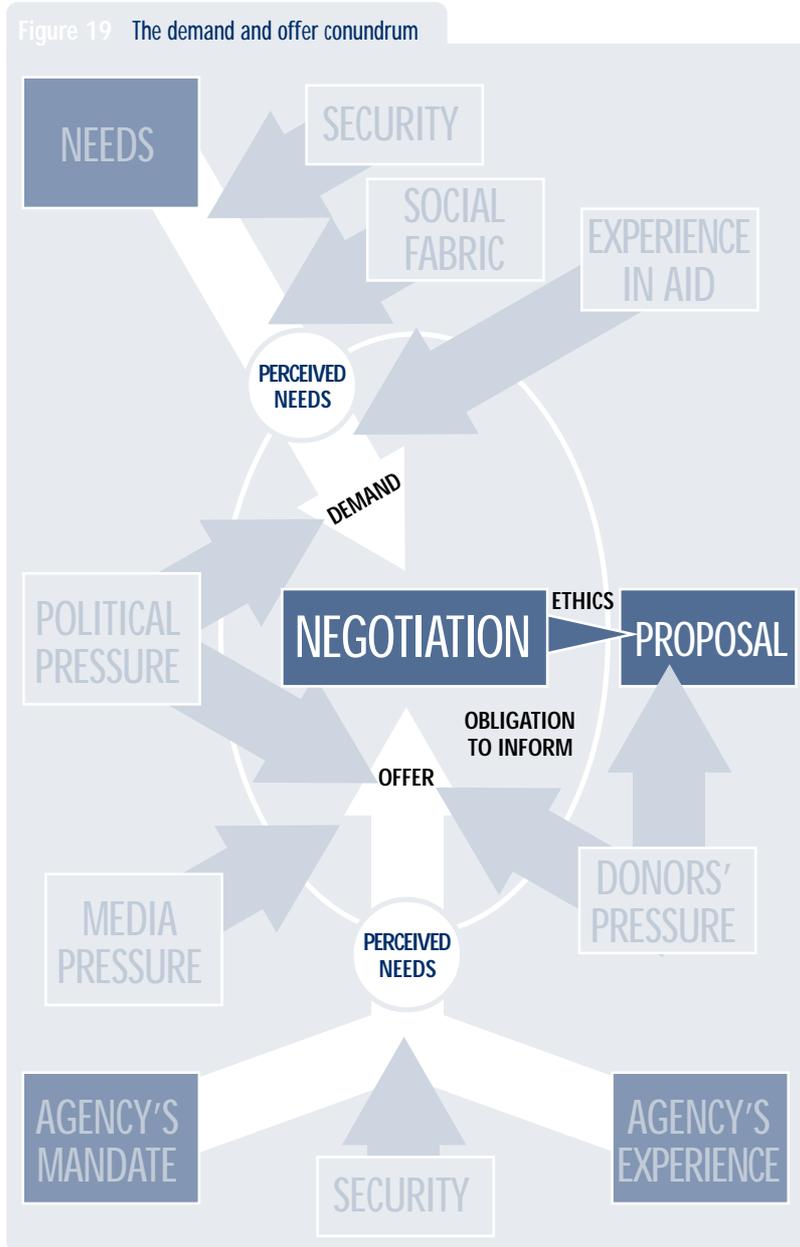
### 3.6.2 THE DEMAND AND OFFER CONUNDRUM

There is sometimes debate in the aid industry about whether the demand or the offer comes first. Indeed, the recipients at the end of the chain are now so aware of how the aid community functions that they are increasingly aware of how they will respond to our questions.

*Similar comments were heard in different parts of the world: 'we know very well what you, aid agencies, want. If we see "blankets without borders", we ask for blankets, if we see "roofs without borders", we ask for roofs . . . We are the kings of humanitarian aid'.*

It is crucial, therefore, to be aware of the numerous biases in the system and to be ready to discuss them with other stakeholders, especially those at the 'receiving end'.

Figure 19 The demand and offer conundrum



The first thing to do is to clarify what we know about the way in which needs are often transformed into a demand. To fill in the table above, you may start by listing the factors that affect the formulation of needs and demands, and present them as in the illustration below.

These diagrams can be used in various ways. You can use them personally to capitalise on your understanding of needs and demands, or you can use them to stimulate discussion with stakeholders in focus groups, for example. This may be useful in going beyond the stereotypic formulation of needs, in encouraging debate, and in avoiding shopping lists of requests from members of the affected population. They can also be a way of showing that your approach to identifying needs is not naive. This is important in establishing mutual respect, and to engaging in a meaningful process to identify needs.

2



#### Exercise 16 Transforming needs into demands

##### Objective

The aim of this exercise is to develop a consensus on the process of needs and demands and to understand their formulation.

##### Participants

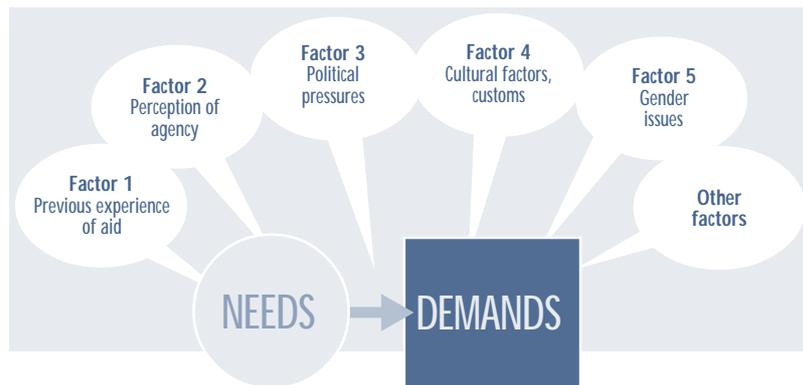
This exercise can be conducted in mixed or separate groups, to ensure that the needs and demands of various sub-groups in the population are taken into account.

**Step 1** Invite the group to list all of the affected population's needs. Be careful to separate 'structural' needs from specific ones resulting from, or exacerbated by, the crisis

**Step 2** Distinguish between needs and demands on the list. Share with the group the difference between the two

**Step 3** Ask the group: which factors affect needs and how are the latter transformed into demands? Try to establish a relationship between needs, demands and other factors. Do not hesitate to encourage discussion through questions.

The following drawing provides a good example of how to analyse needs and demands.



2

### 3.6.2 WHOSE NEEDS, WHOSE DEMANDS?

One danger of participatory processes is that only a section of the population is involved in the assessment phase, introducing bias in regard to the identification of needs and demands. The natural course of action leads us directly to the official local structures that are in charge of 'representing the interests of the community'.

There is always considerable suspicion among aid-agency staff or, sometimes, among the population itself about these local institutions and their interaction with the assistance provided. 'Behind-the-scenes' comments often concern the mismanagement of aid—the attribution of assistance to kin, for instance—and other classic charges. Engaging in an organised, professional, but nevertheless generous, participatory process is supposed to help tackle this.

The following questions are often raised at this stage.

- How can we, via the participatory process, listen more to those who are often 'voiceless'?
- Is it our role to disturb local social and power systems by seeking to hear, in particular, the 'voiceless'?

This is where the importance of having reached an adequate understanding of the social and political context, and of having included a diverse range of participants in the various collective exercises, is underscored.

Still, it remains the case that these are difficult questions, to which there is no single answer. It will depend on the choices that you make. In any event, the management of these questions requires tact, skill, and subtle awareness of the social, economic and political situation, as behind it are issues concerning the protection of the affected population, and the security and impartiality of your organisation.

2

### ▶ **Not forgetting children's view in the assessment phase**

Children are seldom involved in the assessment phase. Yet experience shows that including them allows for better understanding of problems like child prostitution and sex abuse, child marriage, and other cultural traditions affecting child welfare. Moreover, children often provide a specific insight on situations that, otherwise, might not have been fully appreciated.

Below are a few tips on how to engage with children.

- Consulting children directly can be done through child focus groups. When this is difficult or impossible e.g. when children are very young, you can engage with mothers, and other carers (especially when carers, such as siblings, are themselves children or adolescents).

- During needs assessments, children should be encouraged to express their opinions, either through games or directly, depending on their age.
- All dialogue with children should be in their mother tongue, using a vocabulary that they feel comfortable with. Interpreters should be present if humanitarian actors do not speak the child's language.

### 3.7 KEY ISSUES IN THE ASSESSMENT PHASE AND THE TOOLS AVAILABLE

The assessment phase is essential to a programme's success, since it will generate information on which the programme design will be based. Numerous exercises have been proposed in order to conduct it in a participatory manner. The issues to cover in this stage, and the tools that are available to do so, are summarised below.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Historical context	Interviews with key informants
Geographic and climatic context	Storytelling
Socio-cultural and ethnic context (ethnic composition, gender analysis, age distribution)	Focus groups
Economic and social situation	Historical line
Previous history of development or humanitarian action	Socio-anthropological analysis
Previous history of participation	Mapping of the area
	Activity/climatic calendars
	Graph showing economic processes
	Wealth ranking
	Proportional piling

#### UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS AND ITS EFFECTS

Frequency and types of crises in the area	Interviews with key informants
Nature, intensity and the roots of the crisis	Focus groups
Nature and intensity of the impact of the crisis	Storytelling
Access to the population and security issues	Mapping of the affected area and related changes
	Transect walks
	Activity and climatic calendars
	Graphs showing impact on economic processes
	Proportional piling

## UNDERSTANDING WHO IS WHO

Social set-up and traditional structures  
 Political actors/local administration  
 Local NGOs  
 Actors responsible for perpetrating violence  
 Characteristics of stakeholders  
 Relationships between stakeholders  
 Social and institutional changes

Socio-anthropological analysis  
 Stakeholder analysis  
 Institutional analysis  
 Interactions diagrams  
 Venn diagrams  
 Proximity–distance analysis

## UNDERSTANDING VULNERABILITIES AND CAPACITIES

Capacities and vulnerabilities disaggregated by group  
 Coping mechanisms  
 Identification of capacities that can be strengthened through the programme  
 Identification of what is already being done to avoid overlap or undermining local strategies

Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis  
 Proportional piling

## UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND DEMANDS

Qualification of problems and needs  
 Quantification of problems and needs  
 Identification of how needs are transformed into demands  
 Differentiation between the needs and demands of various groups

Collection of existing information  
 Proportional piling and wealth ranking

## CHAPTER 4

# DESIGN

### 🕒 Objective of Chapter 4

By the end of this chapter you should be familiar with a series of tools and approaches to design a programme in a participatory manner, while paying attention to key cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination and minorities, and respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence).

## 4.1 BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

### 4.1.1 THE PROCESS

In current practice, final decisions concerning programme design, such as where to go, what to do and whom to target, are very seldom taken in a participatory way.

They are often the result of the application of a mandate—for instance, certain agencies focus primarily on handicapped people, while others systematically target children. Some choices are imposed as a consequence of top-down decisions taken by donors or aid agencies' headquarters.

Hygienic kits were distributed under a humanitarian programme in former Yugoslavia. Yet a survey of the affected population revealed that food would have been the item that they would have mentioned first if they had been consulted. The choice, though, was made according to logistical considerations and to concern about completing the programme swiftly. The

priorities of the donor and of the aid agency, therefore, overshadowed those of the affected population.

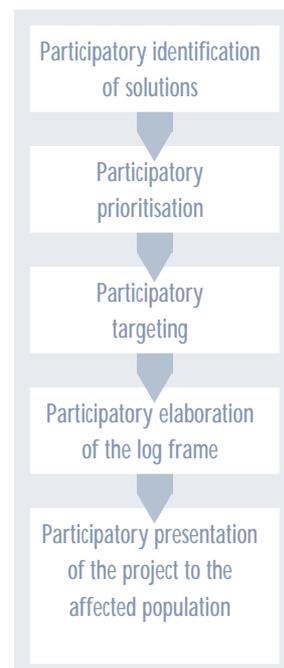
Other choices are the product of history, such as existing links between your organisation and a particular area, and the former presence in the region of your head of mission or the desk officer back at headquarters. Sometimes, the choice of 'where to go' is the end result of a coordination mechanism or, conversely, of a flag-planting strategy. Very often, it is also dictated by security and logistical considerations.

What matters most of all, is that you explain to the affected population in a transparent manner the choices that have been made and the rationale behind them. In most cases, people will respect this, as long as they believe that they do not conceal hidden agendas.

In many cases, however, there will always be room for affected populations and key individuals to contribute to the design process. How much will depend on you and your agency.

Participatory programme design is a challenging, yet exciting, exercise, which is easily manageable when broken down into several steps.

⚠ It is important to remember that programme design has strong links to the **assessment** phase. You may find that you have to go back to exercises described in the assessment phase, or to refine those that you have already conducted, to help you and the people you are working with make decisions on the future programme.



- ▶ To be implemented fruitfully and meaningfully, this phase requires that you have read Part 1 of the handbook. This means that an acceptable level of clarity, transparency and understanding has been reached between you and your organisation on the one hand, and between you and the affected population and its associated structures on the other. Otherwise, you risk creating false expectations.

#### 4.1.2 WHERE TO BE CAREFUL! KEY-CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

The most delicate steps in the design phase are **prioritisation** of activities and **targeting**, since, although many people can be involved in the assessment stage, not all will benefit equally from the programme. These steps can, therefore, be a source of conflict between your organisation and the affected population and/or within the affected population. This is where most attention must be paid to the following cross-cutting issues.

##### **A Security and protection**

Involving members of the affected population in decision-making processes can increase social tension and the risk of dispute. When decision-making is devolved to certain individuals or structures within the affected population, they can be put in jeopardy or threatened by other, discontented members of the population.

As an external stakeholder, your organisation may have to play the role of mediator. Lines of responsibility in regard to choices that have been made need to be clearly defined. Communication on the rationale for decisions taken is essential to avoiding or mitigating present and future tension. In fact, bringing people together to make decisions on prioritisation and targeting can be a very effective way of putting key concerns on the table, and resolving them collectively.

Participation of the affected population in programme design is also essential to ensuring that it takes into account protection issues.

Members of the affected population know best what may put them at risk, and what can be done to reinforce their protection.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can participatory prioritisation and targeting be done in a way that minimises the risk of social tension and dispute?
- How can I ensure that the rationale for decisions is clearly communicated to all members of the affected population, and that the explanations are understood/accepted?
- How can the participation of affected populations in programme design help to ensure that programme activities do not generate risks for them? And how can it help to reinforce their protection?

2

### **B Discrimination and minorities**

Prioritising and targeting entails certain risks related to discrimination.

- The type of activities chosen can sometimes *de facto* exclude certain groups (for example, training programmes excluding illiterate individuals), and favour others already privileged in some way.
- Yet, targeting an intervention at a marginalised group can result in further isolation or stigmatisation of its members.

Some programmes in **Sri Lanka** targeted widows. However, 'the term widow in the Tamil language implies that which is inauspicious and pitiable. In this manner, any assertion of self-will or display of self-confidence by these women was squashed from the very beginning. Women in some instances refused this classification'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sachithanandam, S., 'Participatory Approaches to Development under Civil War Conditions. The Experience in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka 1991–95', in Bastian, S and Bastian, N. (eds), *Assessing Participation, A Debate from South Asia*, (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996), p. 191.

Participatory programme design can serve to evade such difficulties. Activities that exclude certain groups can be identified collectively and either avoided or complemented with other activities, for instance. The rationale for targeting specific groups can be defined collectively or even reviewed, thereby precluding the risk of future tension and stigmatisation. In particular, those marginalised people being targeted by an intervention should, at the very least, be consulted on how they feel it would be appropriate to do so.

This issue is discussed further in the section on targeting.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can the participation of affected populations, especially marginalised groups, in the programme design serve to ensure that these groups are not wholly excluded from the programme?
- How can participation in programme design guarantee that programmes targeting marginalised groups do not further stigmatise them, but, rather, support them in a way that they find appropriate?

### C **Impartiality and independence**

In the project design phase, be careful when defining project activities, selecting members of the affected population and staff, and choosing local partner(s) not to favour a particular group in a way that could result in you losing your impartiality and independence. In certain contexts, the donor you are working with will also strongly affect how the population perceives you.

It is important to ensure that various stakeholders and parties participate in the process to avoid bias. Decisions that have been made need to be explained clearly. An essential part of respecting these principles is to communicate and clarify them from the outset. And remember to ask yourself in relation to each decision you make, whether your actions are consistent with your principles.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How do I ensure that the design process is conducted according to the needs of the population and not in response to pressure applied by a particular stakeholder?
- Are various population sub-groups represented in the groups that are defining the programme, to avoid potential bias?
- Is my communication strategy adequate to ensure transparency and that the population understands the rationale behind decisions made, including my organisation's position on impartiality and independence?

## 2

### 4.1.3 FROM NO PARTICIPATION TO SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

The processes and methods presented in this chapter can be used in various ways, depending on how your organisation positions itself with regard to participation. Each potential approach carries with it possible benefits, but also risks, which it is important to be aware of.

## 4.2 PARTICIPATORY IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS

*'Solutions to problems are not the product of a consensus, but of a negotiation between the various groups. [...] The wealth of solutions is found in their diversity rather than in their uniformity.'*

Aid actors, especially if they have had no or little time to conduct a proper assessment, often arrive in theatre with pre-packaged sets of activities and standard programme content. In many instances, especially protracted crises, complex emergencies and immediate post-conflict situations, these kit-based approaches reveal their limitations and risks.

**Table 8** The instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participation in the design stage

Description	Potential benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Instrumental</b>			
No or limited participation in design.	Can introduce new ideas/ techniques unknown to the local population  Can target groups that would be excluded in the participatory process	Poorly adapted programme  No adhesion between population and programme objectives and activities  Low level of mobilisation in future stages  Low level of trust building	Communicate clearly and frequently the rationale for the programme
<b>Collaborative</b>			
Design conducted jointly between your organisation and a structure associated with the affected population (such as a local NGO or CBO)	Reinforce local capacities (good in situations where there are recurring crises)  Strengthen the link between relief, rehabilitation and development*  Trust building	Loss of impartiality, depending on choice of partner  Can increase the cost (time, staff, logistics) of design  Design reduced to accepting 'shopping lists' if the population is accustomed to assistance	Know whom you are working with well  If needed, train local partners in participatory design methods and other technical matters
<b>Supportive</b>			
Design carried out by affected population or associated structure.	Boost the weight and recognition of local capacities  Increase the appropriateness and level of ownership of the programme  Trust building	Respect for your organisation's principles?  Are certain groups being excluded?  Are activities supporting a warring faction, for instance?  Local initiative can be poorly adapted or not feasible*	Know the context and the people you are supporting well  Both sides conduct an institutional analysis, putting their strengths and weaknesses on the table  If needed, train people in design methods and other technical issues

 Sometimes members of the affected population would like to implement ideas that they have heard about or have seen in local newspapers or during visits to other areas. If you think this is not pertinent, not feasible or even dangerous, you have to be ready to enter into a dialogue and to explain your viewpoint. Participatory feasibility analysis is often the only way to prevent groups from engaging in inappropriate projects, which would raise many difficulties at a later stage.

The objective of this step is to identify the survival strategies or coping mechanisms that have helped—and often are still helping—the affected population to deal with adverse circumstances. A three-step exercise can prove useful in understanding and mainstreaming them in the overall participatory approach strategy.

#### 4.2.1 PHASE 1 IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITISATION OF EXISTING SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

This can also be done in the assessment phase, such as during the CVA, when comprehending needs and demands. The aim is to identify existing options in regard to solutions and known strategies on which the affected population will attempt to rely, and to prioritise them. This can be done using relatively simple tools:

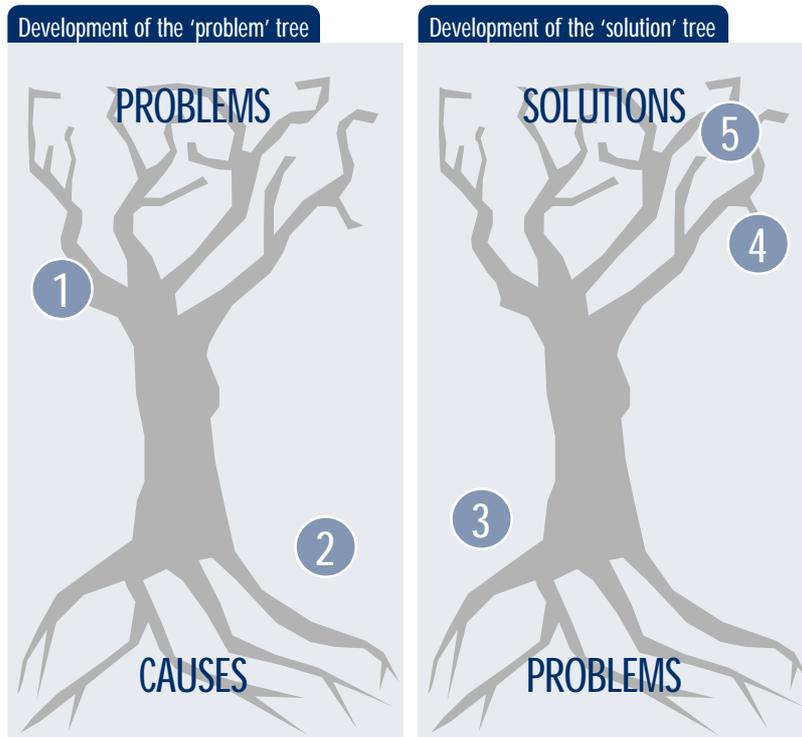
- classic focus groups, with boards, charts and pencils, or what you can find on the spot (stones, sticks and sand, for example); and
- specific group exercises aimed at elaborating the 'pillars-of-survival' diagram.

#### 4.2.2 PHASE 2 WHAT CAN BE DONE? IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS, CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

The issues to be discussed through out the participatory process should focus on how to turn the 'pillars-of-survival' diagram into options or opportunities for intervention. To do this, one should utilise a two-period timeframe.

- What can be done to save and alleviate suffering **now**?
- What can be done immediately **afterwards**?

Tools available to address this issue include focus-group meetings to elaborate a grid indicating problems, options and constraints, and/or a problem/solution tree system. The latter is described below.



2



### Exercise 17 Problem/solution tree

#### Objective

The goal is to identify cause–effect relationships and to stimulate debate to find solutions to a specific problem.

#### Participants

For this type of exercise, a small group is more efficient than a bigger one. Several sessions are recommended for different groups.

#### Do you need guidance?

This process requires time and preparation.

continued ▶

**Exercise 17 Problem/solution tree** *continued*

**Step 1** Prepare your session. You will need paper and pens. If necessary, you can use pictures or drawings to illustrate ideas and points raised (such as if the participants are illiterate)

**Step 2** Create a list of problems, and try to establish relationships between them. These will be the branches of your first tree

**Step 3** Create a list of problems, and try to establish relationships between them. These will be the branches of your first tree

**Step 4** Ask participants to identify the origins of the problems and to establish cause–effect relationships. At the end of this step participants will have painted a global picture

**Step 5** Starting from problems as the roots of your second tree, ask participants to identify solutions to these problems. They will be the first level of branches of your second tree

**Step 6** Open discussions on the impact of the proposed solutions. Add them to the picture as the second level of branches of your second tree

**Step 7** Verify and validate the trees. One way to do this is to ask participants to explain the pictures. Share the results of these sessions

- ▶ It is important throughout the process of identifying solutions to be open to suggestions from local people or affected populations, since they have precise knowledge of their situation. However, the organisation may also have expertise and knowledge to contribute to the process, and it can play a key role in examining the feasibility and the pertinence of solutions proposed by participants. As such, identifying adapted solutions rests on a balanced contribution from the affected population and the agency.

Given the conflict and the level of displacement, civilians in Sri Lanka do not necessarily have the requisite expertise or insight to carry projects forward successfully in situations where the location, soil, flora, fauna, climate and market conditions are unfamiliar and where there have been major changes in relation to commodity and labour demands. An elderly man in Kalkulam explained that a consultation process led by an agency was effective but that village inhabitants had made poor decisions, asking for goats that died due to adverse local weather conditions, and pumps that they did not know how to operate.

At this stage, what might emerge is a complex picture of a multitude of needs and solutions, each referring to a particular segment of the population. Do not try to find a 'middle path' by attempting to define the 'average victim' entitled to receive a 'standard assistance kit'. People of different age, gender and socio-economic status might have different needs.

- ▲ Designing a programme is about making choices. Ensure that the process for doing so is as transparent and participatory as possible!

## 4.3 PARTICIPATORY PRIORITISATION

Participatory prioritisation includes:

- defining priority areas;
- defining priority action; and
- defining priority target groups.

The last point, which is very sensitive and more specific, is addressed in section 4.4.

### 2

#### 4.3.1 DEFINE THE PRIORITY AREA

Geographic targeting at the macro-level (such as the choice of provinces) has often been done much earlier in the process. You will not be involved in a participatory process in an area that has not already been more or less identified.

At this stage, a more refined geographic targeting exercise (villages and neighbourhoods, for instance) will need to be conducted. This is also discussed in section 4.4.

#### 4.3.2 DEFINE THE PRIORITY ACTION

After the list of potential solutions and interventions has been drawn up, the next step is to identify from among them the priorities for action. These will be determined not only by the nature of needs, but also by what the agency is able to do, and what local capacities exist. There are often constraints on what you and your organisation can or cannot do (including donor conditions and level of expertise). It is important to explain to the affected population in a transparent manner what you can and cannot do, and why.

▲ The priorities established by the population may differ from those perceived by the agency. Listening to and understanding these requests are the first step in openness to expectations. Dialogue and negotiation are central to participatory prioritisation.

Aid workers in Angola were surprised by the frequency with which IDPs request assistance to build an *ondjango* (the umbundu word for a simple community meeting place), even when they appear to have other, more pressing, practical needs. Constructing an *ondjango* means that a community has somewhere to convene, and thus to re-establish its identity as a community (in a new place or when it returns to its old location). Dignity and identity are important considerations for an affected population after a crisis has peaked.

Identifying priorities for action in a participatory manner can be done through focus groups and collective brainstorming. Do not be surprised, though, if, at the end of the process, you find yourself confronted with a range of priority actions, corresponding to the different vulnerabilities existing among the affected population. Each action can have the same amount of importance attached to it, but can target a different group. This situation can be summarised as follows.

**Table 9** Priorities for action and different vulnerabilities

Vulnerable groups	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Options for action	Action set 1	Action set 2	Action set 3	Action set 4

Choosing between these groups and the corresponding action is done through the targeting process.

## 4.4 PARTICIPATORY TARGETING

Participatory targeting aims to ensure an optimal level of culturally acceptable equity and to limit possible security incidents, while trying to respect the overall programme objectives—that is, to assist those affected by the crisis. It involves:

- refined geographical targeting (micro-level); and
- targeting of population groups that will benefit and/or participate in the programme.

### 4.4.1 REFINED GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING

2

In certain situations, there is a need to refine geographical targeting: where the scale of the disaster is considerable; when needs overwhelm existing resources; or when needs are spread unevenly across a very large area.

Where the objective is to select a restricted number of villages, for example, you can organise a discussion group with village chiefs or representatives, and conduct proportional-piling exercises to identify those areas in the greatest need of assistance.

- ▲ Given the importance of humanitarian assistance to the population as a whole, the transparency and communication strategy pertaining to geographical targeting is vital.
- ▶ Large meetings to present the results of proportional-piling and ranking exercises are among the few known and tested tools available for conducting refined geographical targeting. Issues are extremely sensitive, centring on impartiality, independence and capacity to resist all kinds of pressure.

#### 4.4.2 TARGETING OF THE POPULATION TO BE ASSISTED

Four main considerations, which have to be shared at length with the population, local authorities and other stakeholders, lie behind the process:

- the need to be as efficient as possible in alleviating suffering (to have a real impact with available assistance);
- the need to work within resource constraints;
- the need to ensure that the most vulnerable people are assisted; and
- the need to take all possible action to avoid aid dependency.

 Remember, targeting is a very sensitive exercise, socially and politically. It can create a great deal of tension between your agency and the population, and/or within the population. As an external actor, you will probably be playing the part of a **mediator and facilitator** in a participatory targeting process.

Experience shows that completely devolving the process to the affected population can cause serious problems.

*In Afghanistan, an organisation attempted to devolve the selection of female participants in a relief project to members of the consultative boards of local community assemblies (the community forums). This put considerable pressure on the board members, who were accused by community members of favouring their relatives, while the latter claimed that they were excluding them from the selection process to avoid accusations of nepotism! Furthermore, actual fighting erupted between women over the question of who was most vulnerable. The agency had to abandon this approach, as it was undermining its community-development efforts.*

If carefully managed, however, delegating responsibility for selecting those to be assisted to community members can be a successful process, and it can enhance the commitment of the affected population.

In the case of an agricultural rehabilitation programme for the displaced communities of Kalongue (Bukavu), 'the smallholders were chosen by the community of smallholders'.

The objective is to allow smallholders to re-plant crops and to build up their livestock via a rotating credit system. Given that the majority of the population is short of food, the first smallholders to benefit from this scheme are responsible for planting crops and 'repaying their debt' by making their grain and animals available to their neighbours. Consequently, the initial participants must not eat either the grain or the animals that were given to them.

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During a public meeting, names were put forward to determine who should benefit from the project. Some of the smallholders withdrew because they felt that they could not satisfy the stipulation not to eat the grain. Those present at the meeting selected participants, while bearing in mind that the most vulnerable families should not be chosen.

Designing a participatory targeting process involves two main steps.

#### **A Step 1 participatory identification of targeting criteria**

 Identification of criteria is a complex and very sensitive exercise, where the vision and experience of aid agencies may not match the traditional understanding of aid provision.

This is where participation can become tricky. Is it a process to negotiate vulnerability criteria? Is it a process to promote internationally accepted vulnerability categories? Is it a way to make people commit to our agenda? Is it acceptance of what is seen to make sense in a given cultural context? Or is it just recognising our incapacity to meet fully our objective of assisting the most at risk, and transferring responsibility for this to local actors?

**Aid agencies' conception of vulnerability may not correspond to the actual situation.** Our focus on children and mothers, for instance, often disguises the dire conditions in which the older segment of the population barely survives. In many societies, it is not exceptional for a pregnant woman to be very rich. Also, in war-torn countries, conflict veterans are often listed as people to be assisted, even if they are young and healthy.

**In fact, most societies tend to promote equality** (everybody should receive the same) **as opposed to equity** (people obtain assistance according to their needs, level of distress or level of commitment). In addition, **targeting is often not socially acceptable**, especially in societies where the social contract, based on equal allocation of external resources, is central to ensuring that people remain within reach of the social-security net ('you share with me when you have, I share with you when I have', for example). It is not surprising, then, to see people sharing what they have received a few hundred meters from the distribution site. Cultural and societal sensitivity is crucial in this exercise.

If you have a certain amount of room for manoeuvre in regard to defining targeting criteria, there are several ways of conducting this process. Two approaches are presented below.

- **Economic targeting.** In this case, you establish targeting criteria in relation to real vulnerabilities. To do this, you can undertake a participatory 'wealth- and vulnerability-' ranking exercise, as well as proportional-piling exercises.
- ▶ Maybe you will have already carried out such an exercise in the assessment phase. If you are working with the same population, you can go back to the results of the previous wealth-ranking exercise, and refine them further. If you have narrowed down the area that you will be targeting, you can conduct a new wealth-ranking exercise in a more geographically circumscribed space.

- **Social targeting.** Another way of proceeding is to target particular social groups, such as women or children. But this is also a sensitive matter. Power dynamics at the family, household and community levels are often highly entrenched and complex. Social targeting may lead to resistance from powerful members of society and cause difficulties for the targeted group. It is important, therefore, when targeting a specific social group, not to isolate it, but to work with other groups with which it is in contact. Working with children, for instance, involves cooperating with the likes of parents, teachers and religious and community leaders.

## 2

For this type of exercise, it is probably necessary to carry out a **gender analysis**, or **equity analysis**, of the social and economic situations of particular social groups.

Experience in Sri Lanka shows that projects targeting women, children or young people have been more successful in fostering participation than generic schemes that affect whole population groups or are directed at men. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that men are at work, or by the fact that alcohol consumption among them is higher in certain regions. Agencies also noted that women worked together more effectively, especially when organised into groups based on different caste and socio-economic status, which men find difficult to deal with.

Agencies also noted that children seemed to engage more effectively with participatory projects. They were eager to initiate activities that would enhance the quality of life in the community. In addition, youth involvement in community work led to a commitment from adults to undertake community-development projects, as well as a noteworthy reduction in the consumption of alcohol.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hart, J., Participation of Conflict-Affected Children in Humanitarian Assistance Programming, Learning from Eastern Sri Lanka, report for CIDA, Colombo, 2002.

- ▶ Useful tools to help people understand the plight of various groups, and thereby to identify which ones may be in most need of assistance, are **role-playing games** and **small theatre plays**. These can take time to set up, but they are very effective and popular in refugee camps, for instance, where people have the time to invest.

### **B Step 2 participatory information-sharing processes**

The key word here is 'transparency'. It is vital to guarantee that a few individuals or groups do not control information, which, in turn, is essential for **social control** to be effective. Social control is the process whereby members of the affected population themselves ensure that targeting procedures are respected, but this requires that they know what they are entitled to and why, and how they go about getting it.

At this stage, one should also be ready to receive and respond to claims and complaints, since even the most effective targeting process always excludes some potential targets.

Information sharing can take various forms: public meetings; notice boards; distribution of leaflets; and public announcements through the media.

## **4.5 THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK: A TEAM-BUILDING MECHANISM**

Development of a logical framework can be viewed as a bureaucratic, laborious, donor-imposed, time-consuming exercise. Yet it has the potential to become a key team-building mechanism if done in a timely and proper manner. Behind it is a very simple idea: two minds are better than one.

Organising a small workshop with a team that is in charge of project identification or will be involved in project implementation is a very powerful way of bringing everybody into line, and making sure that

everyone is working together. This will prove particularly valuable when the team confronts difficulties.

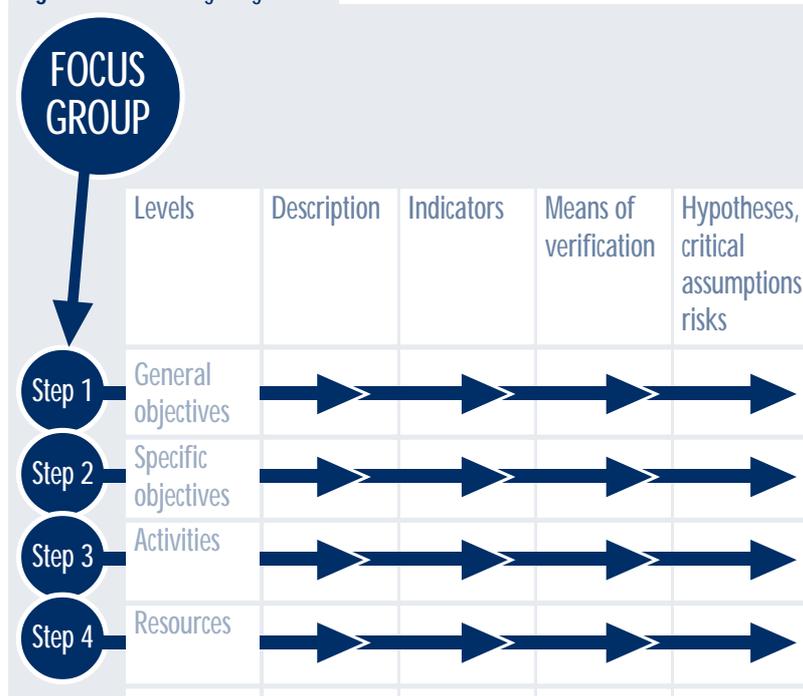
The various steps involved in elaborating a log-frame are presented in the table below:

An important step is to define who will do what (among the activities), and who will contribute which resources. Again, exercises like proportional piling can be useful here.

Defining the indicators and the means of verification entails designing a monitoring and evaluation system. Participatory design of the monitoring and evaluation system is discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

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Figure 19 Elaborating a log-frame



## 4.6 PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION TO THE AFFECTED POPULATION

Creating a forum where all elements of the programme can be presented and discussed with a broad section of the affected population is a challenge rarely undertaken. However, it has been shown in several instances to be a powerful tool in creating a collective sense of working together, and establishing mutual respect between the agency and the affected population.

It often only requires one session to share, debate and validate hypotheses, ideas, objectives and strategies.

## 4.7 CONCLUSION

The quality of the assessment and of the design - complementary and interconnected steps in the project cycle - is likely to be seriously affected by the level and degree of participation of the affected population, its institutions, its economic actors and its representatives.

The assessment and programme design stage is one of the most crucial steps, where pressures, power games and cultural bias, for instance, can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful programme, and sometimes between life and death.

The key issues raised in this chapter, and the tools available to address them, are summarised below.

### PARTICIPATORY IDENTIFICATION OF SOLUTIONS

What are the main problems that the population is facing?	Focus groups
What are the causes?	Pillars of survival/fishbone
Which coping strategies can be built on?	Problems/causes tree
What are the possible solutions?	Problems/solutions tree
	Analysis of problems

### PARTICIPATORY PRIORITISATION

What are the priorities in terms of action? For which groups?	Focus groups
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## PARTICIPATORY TARGETING

Where to target?	Focus-group exercises
Who to target?	Social-control mechanisms
How to target?	Proportional piling
How can I ensure that those who are targeted are not made more vulnerable or stigmatised?	Role-plays/Games
How can I ensure that those who are not targeted understand the rationale behind the chosen targeting criteria?	Theatre
How can social-control mechanisms serve to ensure that the process is fair and respected?	Gender analysis
Equity issues	Equity analysis
Gender issues	

## PARTICIPATORY ELABORATION OF THE LOG-FRAME

Definition of general and specific objectives	Focus-group exercises and workshops
Definition of activities	Proportional piling
Definition of who does what	
Design of the resource mobilisation strategy (human, financial and material resources)	
Design of a monitoring mechanism	
Design of an evaluation mechanism	

## PRESENTATION TO THE AFFECTED POPULATION

Validation of objectives	Meetings, debate and clarification of questions raised
Validation of action plan (activities, who does what and who contributes what)	

2

## CHAPTER 5

# IMPLEMENTATION

### 🎯 Objective of chapter 5

By the end of this chapter you should be familiar with a series of tools and approaches to allow you to put into practice your participation strategy (in the implementation phase), while paying attention to key cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination and minorities, and respect for humanitarian principles).

## 5.1 CLARIFY YOUR APPROACH

In many instances, participation is vital:

- to implement a programme successfully;
- to access difficult areas and to instigate programmes in zones where the regular presence of agency staff is very problematic; and
- to support the transition between humanitarian and development programmes.

### 5.1.1 THE PROCESS

Participatory implementation should, in principle, consist of a series of steps, which is often summarised as shown right.



These phases can be implemented in different ways depending on the level of participation that has been agreed. But this is not without raising a certain number of questions!

### 5.1.2 WHERE TO BE CAREFUL! KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### **A Security and protection**

In the implementation phase, participatory approaches favouring ownership of programmes by local populations can reinforce the security of the project and of agency teams—that is, where the population is ready to provide its support (provision of information and mobilisation in the event of security problems, for instance). Also, the space that has been opened up for discussion in previous phases can facilitate the materialisation of security and protection issues, making it possible to address them before difficulties arise.

However, the transfer of resources that occurs in this phase is often a source of danger. Transferring the means of action to local organisations can result in them experiencing daily pressures—when negotiating access, for example—or it can endanger them in relation to the parties to a conflict. Implementation must, therefore, take into account the possible negative impacts on security and protection.

#### **Children's participation and protection**

Participatory methods aimed at children should be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This resolution and the specifications for child refugees outlined in the UNHCR's protection mandate constitute the legal framework for protecting children worldwide. These documents should be taken into account before a programme is designed. For example, programmes must respect legal age limits for manual labour and international child-care criteria. Furthermore, care must be taken to ensure that programmes do not provoke family break-ups (via, for example, the design of housing projects).

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can participation by the affected population in the implementation phase support programme ownership in a way that makes the population feel committed to my security?
- How can participation in the implementation phase promote the emergence of security and protection issues concerning the population, such that security incidents can be avoided?
- How can I ensure that the transfer of resources or responsibilities to the people I am working with does not place them in danger?

### **B Discrimination and minorities**

The risk of excluding minority groups or marginalised sections of the population in the implementation phase is present at two levels. The first is when the type of activity chosen *de facto* excludes part of the population; for instance, when they do not have the capacity to participate in implementation, due, for example, to lack of time, resources and physical ability. This can be the case with women, who are busy fulfilling child-care responsibilities or are unable to leave their homes, or with the elderly, who are physically unable to contribute to labour-intensive projects. This issue should have been considered in the assessment and design phases.

The second is when you work in collaboration with a local partner or you back a local initiative. Local hierarchies and social and political dynamics are likely to be expressed through these institutions and this can confirm existing patterns of discrimination. It is essential, therefore, to be aware of these dynamics, to discuss them with the people you are working with, and to see how they can be dealt with collectively throughout the various stages of the project. Again, it is best to tackle this issue in the design phase, prior to implementation.

If you have decided to address specifically the issue of discrimination in your programme, and to target specific marginalised groups, it is crucial,

as mentioned above, to work with the powerful members of society, and with other groups with which the target population interacts.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Have I taken into account the capacity of specific groups to participate in programme implementation during the assessment and design phases?
- How do I deal with discrimination when it is entrenched in the local society and I am working with a local partner?
- If I am targeting marginalised groups, am I ready to work with other, more powerful groups to prevent the target group from being further marginalised or stigmatised?

## 2

### **C Impartiality and independence**

Respect for the principles of impartiality and independence, as noted earlier, will depend on choices made in the design phase, in terms of activities, target populations, local partners and staff recruitment, for instance.

During the implementation stage, a number of resources and skills are transferred, such as materials, training, logistical means and salaries. In some cases, participation entails working with existing structures or supporting the establishment of new institutions or social entities. These activities are rarely without political consequences or connotations, so, again, it is crucial to know whom you are working with, how these resources can be utilised, and how your action is perceived.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- Have I carried out a proper institutional analysis during the assessment phase to ensure that I am not engaging in a partnership that can compromise my impartiality, independence and/or legitimacy?
- If the project entails setting up a new committee or structure, how can I monitor the political implications, and ensure that implementation does not compromise my impartiality and independence?

### 5.1.3 FROM THE INSTRUMENTAL TO THE SUPPORTIVE APPROACH

- ▶ The development of your participation strategy in the implementation phase can assume various forms: from a contribution of labour to a partnership with a local actor. Regardless of the approach chosen, the earlier the population is involved in the 'upstream' stages of the project cycle, the greater will be its interest in participating in the implementation phase.

Also note that the participation of individuals in programme implementation is vital. As witnessed widely in the development field, it is based on recognition of the importance of local individual expertise, and the ability to actively involve motivated individuals.

#### **Note on the supportive approach**

In the implementation phase, the supportive approach, in most instances, consists of a transfer of resources that is meant to support a local initiative. These can be financial, material or human (technical guidance and training, for example). There are, nevertheless, a certain number of issues at stake, in relation to:

- good practice in financial management;
- upward and downward accountability; and

**Table 10** The instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participation in the implementation stage

Description	Potential benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Instrumental</b>			
Contribution in labour or material inputs only Cost-recovery system	Reducing costs Reducing time Increasing programme sustainability Enable you to access insecure areas	Lack of trust and mutual misunderstanding can lead to tension if problems arise	Make sure that people have an interest in participating Involving people upstream can enhance mobilisation
<b>Collaborative</b>			
Delegating activities and/or means Subcontracting Engaging in partnerships	Reinforcing local capacities (good in situations where crises are recurrent) Strengthening the link between relief, rehabilitation and development Enhancing programme sustainability Minimising costs Sustaining trust between the organisation and the affected population Enable you to access insecure areas	Loss of impartiality depending on whom you collaborate with Certain loss of control over operations	Know whom you are working with well Establish contract agreements and problem-solving mechanisms Train local partners in participatory tools and implementation activities (such as management and accounting)
<b>Supportive</b>			
Implementation carried out by affected population You provide financial, material or training support	Reinforcing the weight and recognition of local capacities Increasing programme ownership Enhancing programme sustainability Initiating trust between the organisation and the affected population Enable you to access insecure areas	Risk of low-quality implementation Poor accountability Partiality in targeting Poor technical implementation Local structure striving to implement what existed before even if is not adapted to the new situation	Know the context and the people you are supporting well Establish a contractual framework for the partnership Train local partners in participatory tools and implementation activities (such as management and accounting)

- respect for humanitarian principles

 This implies that the supportive approach should not be a naive one!

Do not forget to conduct a common institutional analysis, with both sides putting their strengths and weaknesses on the table, and to triangulate the information that you gather on this partner. Also, be ready to provide sufficient training and support for establishing accountability mechanisms.

## 5.2 PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION

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Programme implementation involves several steps or activities. The affected population can be engaged in each or some of them, depending on the choices that you make, and the approach that you adopt.

### 5.2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF A STEERING COMMITTEE

One of the first steps in initiating participatory programme implementation is to share the 'driving seat', which often necessitates creating a steering committee, including representatives of your organisation and of the partners. This is not always easy or feasible. For more information on the dangers, please refer to Part 1, chapter 1.

 One element to be aware of is the risk of imposing an institutional model that is foreign to the way that local institutions function. In such cases, there is a danger that population involvement will be low, and that little value will be attached to the committee and little attention paid to it. For instance, the population selects representatives that are less influential, competent and/or committed.

It is also important to ensure that the mandate of this committee is made clear to avoid misunderstanding and to motivate participants.

With regard to the instrumental approach, no such committee is created, since the organisation provides the leadership. With regard to the collaborative approach, its role essentially entails monitoring and offering support. With regard to the supportive approach, the committee have an essentially consultative function, with responsibility in the post evaluation stage, of accountability to the donors.

### 5.2.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF LISTS

## 2

The definition of targeting criteria was discussed in chapter 4. The next step in selecting those to be assisted from the affected population is to establish lists, which is also a very delicate process.

The simplest, yet most risk-prone, procedure is to entrust the drawing up of lists to the affected population's local representative(s), without introducing any other social-control mechanisms.

'The governor selected a representative and the representative made a list: he made it with the people he knows and who are his relatives.'  
Members of a *shura* in Nahrin (Afghanistan), an earthquake-affected village

The preparation of lists is often done through local institutions, even by the local administration. In Rwanda, they are often drawn up by the local burgomaster's (Mayor's) office. In Afghanistan, the local *shuras* are frequently involved. In Mozambique, traditional chiefs or *regulos* create them. And in south Sudan, paramount chiefs are engaged, sometimes walking for days through swamps to bring them to collection points.

Yet, there are many risks and potential biases. First, the legitimacy of these institutions and individuals is sometimes in doubt. The *regulos* in Mozambique have their origins in the colonial period, and were

reorganised under the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) in guerrilla-controlled zones. In Rwanda, the burgomasters (mayors) are closely linked to the security apparatus and to the political system. People known to be unsympathetic to the regime are likely, therefore, to be excluded from the lists.

- ▶ To avoid at least some of these risks, an institutional analysis should be carried out, as described in chapter 3.4. A way of minimising the possibility of manipulation, for example, is to disseminate information widely and to utilise social-control mechanisms.

Again, there are differences in how this should happen, depending on the type of approach adopted. In relation to the instrumental approach, most of the time, the affected population is barely involved in the drawing up of lists, and effort is spent on controlling the selection process. In relation to the collaborative approach, your organisation spends less time controlling the selection process, as responsibility for it is shared between you and a local partner. In relation to the supportive approach, you are not involved in controlling the selection process, as responsibility for it lies with the population.

2

### 5.2.3 MOBILISATION OF LOCAL RESOURCES

In many instances, especially in regard to the instrumental approach, people from the affected population will participate by providing:

- labour;
- various materials; and/or
- financial inputs, for example through cost-recovery mechanisms.

The form that this kind of participation takes will depend largely on the type of programme. This is addressed in Part 3.

Although the type of participation is the same, the way in which it is utilised will vary considerably, depending on whether you are

employing an instrumental, collaborative or supportive approach. In the latter case, people will essentially contribute something and receive some kind of assistance or incentive in return (for example, cash-for-work or food-for-work programmes). In regard to the collaborative approach, their motivation lies in their involvement in the assessment and design phases. In regard to the supportive approach, the initiative was theirs. The difference essentially concerns people's input and their relationship with your organisation (partnership or client/business relationship?).

## 2



Several organisations have stressed the important role that children can play in implementing a relatively wide range of programmes. OXFAM and the UNHCR have developed a method called the 'child-to-child approach'.

#### **At school, children can**

- learn together actively;
- help and teach their friends;
- help and protect younger children; and
- help in ensuring that their surroundings are clean.

#### **At home, children can**

- describe and demonstrate what they have learnt;
- help their families to develop good health practices;
- teach and help their younger brothers and sisters;
- play with children who do not attend school; and
- keep the home clean.

#### **In the community, children can**

- pass on messages through games and songs;
- act as messengers and helpers; and
- participate in health campaigns.

## 5.3 ESTABLISHING CONTRACT AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Generating contracts and/or partnership agreements is an essential part of the implementation phase, when more than one organisation or stakeholder is involved.

There are two main types of contracts:

- those covering subcontracting or the delegation of responsibilities and means; and
- those establishing a partnership agreement.

### 5.3.1 DELEGATION OF POWER, DELEGATION OF MEANS

#### **A The conditions for delegation**

In this situation, local actors and institutions are entrusted with implementation of the programme, which entails delegating decision-making powers and responsibility for the project, as well as the transferral of some resources.

Participation at this stage requires:

- clear and accepted lines of responsibility and accountability;
- demonstrated will or capacity to deliver; and
- identification and institutionalisation of problem-solving/trouble-shooting mechanisms.

A first step—when one is about to engage in this type of participation with a population that has not been involved in such programmes before, but has witnessed more in the way of top-down approaches—is to lay the foundations for building trust and to create a space for dialogue (for the voicing of complaints) and negotiation.

 Different participatory mechanisms can be set up, depending on the existing institutional structures. In all cases, though, one should be

careful not to impose a form of organisation that is foreign, and which will not be owned by the population! When the project creates new forms of organisation, which are superimposed on those that already exist, there is a risk of destabilising endogenous strategies and destroying traditional relationships between various groups.

Defining an institutional set-up for a project is, therefore, a very delicate social and political undertaking.

- **If there is already a recognised and accepted institutional set-up** In this case, the first step is to encourage the creation of an ad hoc sub-committee within the existing arrangement, with clear relations with the upper levels of the local institution. This is essential to ensuring that further delegation of responsibility occurs in an accountable manner, which will likely result in the building of confidence and trust. Transparency in regard to the criteria and the processes for establishing this structure, as well as the possibility for the population to participate, is a must, although not necessarily easy in such a context.
- **If there is no recognised and accepted institutional set-up** In this case, the first step is to encourage the creation of a specific committee. A certain amount of training will probably be required in order to cultivate a system that will prove itself effective and equitable, and, therefore, gain the confidence and trust of the population. Given that this committee will be a new entity, it is possible to ensure a high degree of participation and transparency in relation to its establishment. However, there is always the risk that a new committee will be perceived as foreign, or viewed as 'the agency's committee'. Drawing on local cultural references, traditional consultation mechanisms, or types of structures that the population can identify with, is important in encouraging ownership of this body.

Finally, in both situations, there is a danger of confirming discrimination patterns that are entrenched in society. Dealing with this issue requires good knowledge of the local society, tact, and judicious interaction with various population members to see how it can be addressed in a culturally sensitive way.

Between 1992 and 1997, *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* (VSF – Veterinarians Without Borders) implemented an animal health project in two rural districts of Cambodia. Village livestock agents, responsible for providing animal health services, disseminating technical innovations and voicing herders' demands, were elected; these agents were organised in two livestock-agent organisations (one in each district), created to manage veterinary pharmacies, supply village agents, and represent local herders. While successful at the technical level, the project led to the socio-political exclusion of a large portion of the villages' population.

By requiring candidates to be literate, and by taking place under the auspices of the village chief, the election of the livestock agents favoured local elites. The training and material support that these agents received for their activities thus reinforced the prestige and means of already influential individuals and strengthened existing patronage networks. The livestock-agent organisations functioned like private companies run by local leaders. Absence of control mechanisms other than market forces meant that livestock agents were not accountable to local farmers and herders, even though the latter were meant to benefit from the project.

Furthermore, motivating livestock agents to get actively involved in the organisations was difficult. Collective action was novel for them, and the fact that the organisations were set up at the district level, an administrative unit with many political connotations which does not

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<sup>9</sup> Intartaglia, D. (1999), 'Comment allier efficacité technico-économique et efficacité sociale? Enseignements d'un projet en santé animale au Cambodge', *Traverses* n° 5, Editions du Groupe Initiatives, *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières*. ('How to combine technical and economic effectiveness and social effectiveness? Lessons learned from an animal health project in Cambodia')

correspond to villagers' traditional territory (the *pagoda*), made it even less likely that they would get involved.<sup>9</sup>

## B Sub-contracting

Once the institutional set-up is clear, or once you have identified the local actor that you will employ in a subcontracting capacity, you can follow the roadmap presented below, step-by-step. This is very important in ensuring that the modalities of implementation by a local actor are clearly defined, and that the subcontracting process is successful.

**Figure 20 Roadmap for the preparation of an implementation contract**

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- 1 Clarification in regard to which stakeholders are involved in the negotiation—for the establishment of the implementation contract
- 2 Clarification in regard to the nature of the operation that will be subcontracted
- 3 Clarification of the contract timeframe, of technical characteristics, quality expected, and of costs involved
- 4 Clarification in regard to the roles and responsibilities of the parties to the contract
- 5 Clarification in regard to the flow of resources
- 6 Clarification in regard to accountability procedures
- 7 Clarification in regard to problem-solving mechanisms
- 8 Clarification in regard to sanctions to be imposed if implementation is not satisfactory
- 9 Finalisation of the contract
- 10 Signature of the contract

### Contract

Between ... represented by ... thereafter called A  
And ... represented by ... thereafter called B

**Article 1** The present contract is established for the following objective:

**Article 2** The responsibilities of A are ...; The responsibilities of B are ...

**Article 3** The lines of accountability are ...

**Article 4** Problems should be solved as much as possible through the following mechanism ... In case it is not possible, the rule of law of the given Court of Justice will be applied.

This contract is prepared in x copies. The official version will be in the language ...

Location/date

Signatory A

Signatory B

### 5.3.2 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

This is one of the most critical steps in establishing participatory approaches with institutions from the affected population, such as CBOs and NGOs. The principles involved can, nevertheless, apply to other types of partnerships, such as those between several international aid organisations, between several national or local organisations, and between international and national organisations.

#### **A The conditions for partnership**

Establishing a partnership between actors is not a neutral action. It requires time, patience and a relatively balanced flow of resources between the two sides.

In theory, equality between partners is a must. In reality, though, one seldom witnesses this. Therefore, the word 'balanced' is more appropriate. Among the resources that will flow between partners, some are material, while many others are immaterial. Financial resources provided by one partner are sometimes balanced by the time and the information provided by the other.

At the heart of a partnership is a certain vision of the world, where solidarity constitutes more than just offering a helping hand in a period of disaster. It also implies a commitment over time, which takes the aid actor beyond a 'quick-and-dirty', rapid impact type of operation.

#### **B Establishing a partnership agreement**

This is the ultimate level of participation: two parties decide, as equal partners, to engage jointly in an operation. They have reached:

- a shared understanding of the context;
- a shared understanding of the operation's objectives;
- agreement on the distribution of duties and responsibilities; and
- agreement on a problem-solving mechanism.

They also have a common set of goals and planned activities, such as:

- the transfer of skills and capacity building to strengthen the links between relief and development;
- the procedures when working in insecure environments; and
- forward planning for the next crisis.

#### Figure 21 Roadmap for the preparation of a partnership agreement

- 1 Clarification in regard to which stakeholders are involved in the discussion—for the establishment of a partnership
- 2 Clarification in regard to the reasons for a partnership between actors
- 3 Identification of why it is necessary to sign a 'partnership agreement'
- 4 Clarification in regard to the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties to the agreement
- 5 Clarification in regard to the flow of resources
- 6 Clarification in regard to accountability procedures
- 7 Clarification in regard to problem-solving mechanisms
- 8 Finalisation of the agreement
- 9 Signature of the agreement by the partners' designated representatives

## 5.3 KEY ISSUES FOR PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION

There are several principles that one should bear in mind when engaging in this type of participation, regardless of the sector.

### 5.3.1 THE POPULATION'S CAPACITY TO PARTICIPATE

 Before asking people from the affected population to contribute materially or physically to project implementation, it is important to take into consideration their capacity to do so. In crisis contexts, people are under severe stress, and they may not have time to play a part in projects.

Asking too much may lead to a reduction in interest in the programme. Generally, one observes a loss of momentum between the assessment and design phases, when there is collective enthusiasm, and the implementation stage, when obstacles are confronted and commitments have to be met. It is necessary, therefore, to be realistic and pragmatic. Certain forms of participation can be burdensome for all of the parties, and hence it is important to consider where value is added by introducing participatory approaches.

*Following the earthquakes in Nahrin, aid organisations launched shelter reconstruction programmes, introducing earthquake mitigation techniques into the design. While they provided technical supervision and wooden beams for the roof, for instance, people were expected to build their homes in accordance with these earthquake mitigation techniques, including making bricks and gathering stones.*

*While enthusiastic during the assessment phase, by the implementation stage, some people were facing difficulties in making bricks or gathering stones. Furthermore, others could not spare the time to engage in construction, as they were busy securing their livelihoods. The situation was particularly difficult for households with no able-bodied men. Tension and anger rose, as autumn drew near. People's main concern was to finish their*

shelter according to traditional processes—walls made of dried mud and straw (highly vulnerable to earthquakes)—so as to be protected from the cold. The situation proved hard for the agencies to manage.

### 5.3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF NEGOTIATION AT THE DESIGN PHASE

It is very difficult to ask people to participate in something that they have not helped to define, and which they do not consider to be a priority. Furthermore, it is essential that whatever contribution is to be provided is established through negotiation and dialogue, with each party offering something. The more the population is convinced of a project's necessity, the greater will be its contribution.

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Of course, such consultation processes are not easy to manage, since different people will have different expectations and priorities. Transparency, dialogue and pragmatism are again critical to ensuring that the programme runs as smoothly as possible.

A participatory needs assessment carried out in Madhukarai (Sri Lanka) established that the key priority for all of the village's inhabitants was the construction of an access road, which had to pass through a large area of untouched forest and a reservoir. Aside from the unskilled labour supplied by the community, the village Rural Development Agent had to hire a tractor and labourers from neighbouring settlements to complete the work. The contribution to this part of the project by members of the affected population was extremely consistent and effective.

Other identified needs included houses, toilets and wells. But this was harder to achieve, showing the dangers of expecting too much in too short a time. Some members of the affected population were very enthusiastic about the prospect of permanent houses, but found brick making burdensome. Others, such as 'Up-country' Tamils from highland tea estates, where the owners provide housing and sanitation, showed little interest in permanent houses and latrines. By the time it came to building wells and latrines, enthusiasm for the project was relatively low.

### 5.3.3 THE LINKS BETWEEN PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

When participation of the affected population in the implementation stage is high, their responsibility for monitoring and evaluation must nevertheless be clearly explained at the outset.

The design and implementation of participatory monitoring and evaluation activities are discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

### 5.3.4 BE CAREFUL NOT TO UNDERMINE THE LOCAL SYSTEM

Finally, it is important to be careful not to undermine local systems through the introduction of aid projects, even if they are participatory.

In Afghanistan, villagers have managed collectively the rehabilitation and maintenance of *kareze* (underground water channels dug in the sides of mountains to procure water for irrigation networks), irrigation systems and roads. In areas where aid agencies have repeatedly engaged in cash-for-work or food-for-work programmes, involving the rehabilitation of *kareze*, irrigation networks and roads, villagers have reportedly refrained from carrying out these tasks spontaneously, opting to wait for an agency to propose such an arrangement.

During the participatory assessment, it is important to identify what the population usually does, and to build on what exists, rather than to engage in activities that undermine these mechanisms.

## 5.4 DO NOT FORGET LOCAL CAPACITIES!

Regardless of the approach used, recognition of local capacities and the identification of ways and means to strengthen them are key components of participation in the implementation phase. Without such activities, it is difficult to speak of linking relief and development, or of project sustainability.

### 5.4.1 RECOGNISE LOCAL CAPACITIES

Be ready for a two-way process. Local capacities are often surprising and inspiring. You may learn a lot from local actors and affected populations. Local technical and organisational knowledge are often impressive and too often overlooked by aid organisations.

So:

- be modest; and
- be curious.

People will notice if you have this attitude, and they will be much more willing to share their views and experiences

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### 5.4.2 STRENGTHEN LOCAL CAPACITIES

Programmes that adopt an instrumental approach offer an opportunity to transfer knowledge, techniques and resources that can strengthen local capacity. For example, a shelter construction programme under which members of the affected population build their own homes can provide an opportunity to train people in certain construction techniques (such as earthquake mitigation). In the case of collaboration or support for local initiatives, capacity building is almost always necessary to ensure the programme's success. But strengthening the capacity of the local population or local structures is not a random product of participation. It is an activity in itself—sometimes a prerequisite—that needs to be explicitly planned for, in terms of time, staff required, and monitoring.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Implementation is often the most visible phase of the project cycle. The success of participatory implementation, however, depends on the

quality of participation in earlier phases—that is, assessment and programme design. The level of success can only be measured during the implementation stage via an effective monitoring system and an appropriate evaluation procedure. How this can be done through a participatory approach is described in the following chapter.

The main issues that have been addressed in this chapter, and the tools available for tackling them in your programme, are summarised below.

### PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Establishment of a steering committee	Focus groups
Establishment of lists	Public meetings
Mobilisation of resources	

### ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTRACTS AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Delegation of power	Establishment of contracts
Delegation of means/subcontracting	Establishment of problem-solving mechanisms
Establishment of a partnership agreement	

### KEY ISSUES FOR PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION

The population's capacity to participate	Focus groups
The importance of negotiation in the design phase	
The links between participatory implementation, monitoring and evaluation	
Not undermining local initiatives and systems	

### DO NOT FORGET LOCAL CAPACITIES

The importance of recognising local capacities	Observation, listening Focus groups
The importance of strengthening local capacities	

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## CHAPTER 6

# MONITORING

### 🎯 Objective of Chapter 6

By the end of this chapter, you should feel comfortable engaging in a participatory monitoring process, using a series of tools and approaches, paying attention to key cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination and minorities, impartiality and independence).

## 6.1 APPROACHING PARTICIPATORY MONITORING

The monitoring of programmes does not always occur, and seldom does it involve local stakeholders. But it is essential to managing problems as they arise during programme implementation, and to making necessary adjustments, which is a rather frequent procedure in a time of crisis or in a turbulent situation.

### 6.1.1 A FEW WORDS OF CAUTION: KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### **A Security and protection**

Monitoring processes can result in managerial matters and issues related to honesty being placed on the table in the course of the project. They can also highlight errors in the initial design, or difficulties that were not taken into account. Decisions have to be made, and action has to be taken, which might entail potential dangers for certain stakeholders, including those who have detected the problem or those who were responsible for it. People charged with monitoring social control-

mechanisms, for instance, are potentially at risk, especially in a context of social or political crisis. Therefore, they must be chosen carefully and supported in this task. During surveys of the population, anonymity can provide a certain amount of protection.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I make sure that the monitoring process does not create security problems for those involved?
- How can I make sure that the monitoring system takes programme-related security and protection issues into account?
- When necessary, how can I ensure that the anonymity of informants is maintained?

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### **B Discrimination and minorities**

Throughout the monitoring stage, one should pay attention to whether the programme is leading to the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups. Although one should attempt to anticipate this in advance (in the design phase), the effects may not manifest until implementation. Consequently, it is particularly important to focus on this issue during the entire period of project implementation.

This entails listening to those who are 'voiceless', because they are marginalised, or because they cannot attend community assemblies, for instance. Creating the space for them to speak out is a delicate undertaking, which should take into account the ramifications that they may experience as a result, such as risks to their security or further stigmatisation. (See section 5.5.2.)

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I ensure that the monitoring process will record the views of marginalised groups?
- How can I ensure that poorly assisted groups will not be further marginalised or stigmatised due to the fact that they have complained openly during the monitoring process?

### **C Impartiality and independence**

Being impartial and independent at this stage essentially necessitates listening 'to all sides' and garnering the perspectives of different population groups, which may perceive an intervention in different ways. Conducting a variety of focus groups and interviews, in numerous areas that have been affected by the intervention, and being transparent in the process, is one possible way of reaching various parts of the population concerned.

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## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I ensure that the views of all groups and stakeholders are taken into account?
- How can I ensure that, by acting on certain recommendations, I am not being manipulated by particular groups?

### 6.1.2 FROM CONSULTATION TO FACILITATION

The table overleaf describes three different approaches to participation in monitoring.

**Table 11** Instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participatory monitoring

Description	Potential benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Instrumental</b>			
Consultation with various stakeholders	<p>Taking into account the perceptions of the population</p> <p>Increased capacity to react and to adjust to the programme according to the situation</p> <p>You can consult with groups that would be excluded in the participatory process</p>	<p>You can be exposed to many complaints and demands. Low trust; people do not provide constructive information</p>	<p>Inform people of the objective of the exercise</p> <p>Provide feedback on the results of monitoring</p> <p>Explain how the information will be used</p> <p>Be ready to deal with complaints</p>
<b>Collaborative</b>			
Monitoring carried out jointly by your organisation and an associated structure (such as a local NGO or CBO)	<p>Taking into account the perception of the population</p> <p>Reinforcing local capacities (good in regard to recurring crises)</p> <p>Trust building</p> <p>In the long run, it can save time and money</p>	<p>Loss of impartiality depending on the choice of partner</p> <p>Can increase the cost and the time required at the start of the process</p> <p>Transparency may be more difficult to achieve for a local institution</p> <p>Local institutions may have difficulty explaining and implementing changes triggered by the monitoring process</p>	<p>If necessary, train local partners, focussing on the purpose and methods of monitoring, and the participatory tools that can be used</p> <p>Decisions on adjustments and reorientation resulting from monitoring should be taken in negotiation with the partner</p> <p>Difficulties should be managed jointly.</p>
<b>Supportive</b>			
Monitoring carried out by the affected population or associated structure	<p>Reinforcing the weight and recognition of local capacities</p> <p>Increasing appropriateness and ownership of the programme</p> <p>Trust building</p>	<p>Respect for your organisation's principles? Are certain groups being excluded?</p> <p>Local structures and populations engaging in their own projects may not necessarily consider the need to set up a monitoring system</p> <p>Local structure may be reluctant to share negative results with the population and donors</p>	<p>Know the context and the people you are supporting well</p> <p>If necessary, train people, focussing on the purpose and methods of monitoring, and the participatory tools that can be used</p> <p>As an external agency, your role may be one of facilitator, providing guidance on establishing and implementing participatory monitoring</p>

## 6.2 PARTICIPATORY MONITORING: KEY PRINCIPLES

Inclusion of the affected population and local actors in the monitoring process is a rich, yet risky endeavour. The external aid actor has to be ready to be criticised!

It is important to accept that known 'good practices' in monitoring may be challenged by the population and their local representative(s). The debate on monitoring indicators, for instance, might be a complex one. What should be the set of monitoring indicators? Those required by donors? Those required by NGO management? Or those identified by the affected population?

**Figure 22** Whose indicators and criteria?



A few key principles make the process meaningful

**Principle 1** Participation in monitoring has little meaning if the population or local actors have not been involved much earlier in the project cycle—that is, in the assessment, design and implementation phases.

**Principle 2** One should be ready to accept that programmes will be monitored and measured against criteria put forward by the population and local actors.

**Principle 3** Participatory monitoring implies that corrective measures recommended by participants are implemented and acted on. If this does not occur—and if the reasons for not doing so are not explained—the affected population might abandon the process, feeling that, again, it has been betrayed.

**Principle 4** Monitoring processes are not ‘one-shot operations’, but activities that will take place throughout the life of the project. Make sure that local partners and affected populations understand this.

**Principle 5** Transparency in the monitoring process has to be very high, from the design of the monitoring system to decisions taken when a problem has been detected.

**Principle 6** It should be made clear from the beginning that the aim of monitoring is not to apply sanctions, but, rather, to facilitate readjustments, when necessary. However, if illicit activities are identified during implementation, sanctions may, nevertheless, be required.

### 6.3 THE DESIGN OF A PARTICIPATORY MONITORING PROCESS

▶ **Participatory monitoring is an exercise that occurs throughout the project’s duration.** It can be conducted through different mechanisms, with different partners, and it can have different objectives. Consequently, it is important to clarify the different parameters of a monitoring system, that ideally takes place at the design stage. (See chapter 4.)

These parameters concern:

- goals;
- criteria and indicators;
- stakeholders and their role;
- methods to be employed; and
- the means required for monitoring.

Table 12 Parameters of participatory monitoring

Parameters	Questions
<b>Parameter 1</b> Definitions of the purpose of monitoring	<p>Is it to assess the programme's relevance from the affected population's standpoint?</p> <p>Is it to appraise whether needs have changed or not?</p> <p>Is it to identify the effects of the intervention on a specific set of problems?</p> <p>Is it to be informed of the quality of the programme?</p> <p>Is it to be aware of the developing impact of the programme (positive and negative)?</p> <p>Is to adapt the intervention to the actual situation?</p> <p>Is it to compare the evolution of activities with the initial action plan?</p> <p>Is it part of a learning process aimed at preventing the recurrence of error?</p> <p>Is it to keep an eye on the population's level of satisfaction?</p>
<b>Parameter 2</b> Definitions of the indicators to be used	<p>What monitoring criteria and indicators should be used?</p> <p>Those required by donors?</p> <p>Those required by NGO management? Or a set identified by the affected population?</p> <p>Is it possible to elaborate on these indicators and criteria collectively? How and with whom?</p>
<b>Parameter 3</b> Identification of the different stakeholders in a participatory monitoring process	<p>Are there local mechanisms or institutions, accepted and recognised by the population, which could play the role of 'intermediary'?</p> <p>Is it preferable to engage directly with the population?</p> <p>Will it be necessary, for practical reasons, to engineer the emergence of local intermediaries?</p>
<b>Parameter 4</b> Definitions of the methods to be used	<p>Is it possible partly to incorporate monitoring into traditional decision-making and problem-solving mechanisms?</p> <p>Are there any existing and known social-control systems? Is it possible to involve them in the monitoring process?</p> <p>Is it possible to identify collectively an analytical framework for monitoring, including identification of monitoring criteria, indicators and benchmarks?</p> <p>How will the results of monitoring be used?</p>
<b>Parameter 5</b> Identification of the means required	<p>Can we identify the physical means and human resources needed for the process, from among the stakeholders involved in monitoring and from among aid organisations?</p> <p>How can they be mobilised? How can responsibility for mobilising them be shared?</p>

The key questions that should be asked when defining these parameters are presented in the table opposite.

## 6.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONITORING PROCESS

### 6.4.1 THE PROCESS

- ▶ During implementation, the monitoring system is engaged in an **ongoing process**, comprising three steps.

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**Table 13** The three steps in a monitoring cycle

Steps	Questions
<b>Step 1</b> Actual observation and information recording process	Will the process be implemented directly or in partnership with a local actor? In the latter case, what will the terms of the contract be? Which participatory tools will be used? How can we ensure that certain 'voiceless' groups are not excluded from the process? Will the process be credible and safe enough for the 'discontented' to express themselves without fear? Will the process be perceived as rigorous enough for its conclusions to be credible?
<b>Step 2</b> Feedback and decision-making	How will feedback and decision-making on changes and reorientation be given? Will a specific session(s) be organised for this purpose? Will there be enough time for people to digest the findings and to react?
<b>Step 3</b> Use of the results	How will participants be informed of how their views have been taken into account? Is it possible to establish a participatory system to follow up on implementation of the recommendations generated by the monitoring? How can the safety of groups involved in the monitoring process be guaranteed? And how can the risks of stigmatisation or social tension be minimised?

In Choco (**Colombia**), WFP observation committees, made up of members of the population, are responsible for monitoring the food-distribution process, including lists of those to be assisted from the affected population, product quality, quantities dispersed, and the time and date of dissemination. This method of work allows the WFP to reduce its inspection efforts and to strengthen its bonds with the community. Observation committee members call or correspond with the WFP frequently.

#### 6.4.2 THE TOOLS AVAILABLE

Certain tools have been experimented with and are seen as potentially useful and effective in regard to participatory monitoring. They are listed below, along with their specific objectives and advantages, and their limitations and constraints.

#### 6.4.3 PARTNERS IN THE MONITORING PROCESS

##### **A Choosing a partner**

In regard to monitoring, it is very important to choose the most appropriate partner. Regardless of the kind of actor (international or national NGO or CBO, for instance), its staff will be involved, sometimes deeply, in the monitoring process. Control of, or involvement in, a monitoring process can indeed be a source of power. Certain choices can have detrimental consequences. Structures that are perceived as non-representative, or are known to have inappropriate past records, have to be avoided at all costs. Structures that cannot access key segments of the population (such as women and other ethnic groups) should be utilised in conjunction with other bodies, which do not suffer from the same limitations.

-  In addition, care should be taken to ensure that structures involved in participatory monitoring do not abuse the opportunity in order to gain power over the population or other institutions; structures that might have vested interests or hidden agendas should thus be avoided. This is an especially sensitive matter in a context of armed conflict.

**Table 14** Tools available for participatory monitoring

Objectives and advantages	Limitations and constraints
<b>Focus groups, roundtables and meetings</b>	
<p>Enable open discussions to take place.</p> <p>Help to reinforce links with the community and to create a climate of trust.</p> <p>Depending on the issue, it is necessary to have either good representation of different segments of the population (in terms of age, gender, activity and social group) or to have strata-specific groups.</p> <p><b>Note</b> that sensitive subjects like HIV or breastfeeding practices are not discussed in the same fora as road building and security!</p>	<p>Sometimes these techniques can lead to the masking of the views of those who do not dare to speak.</p> <p>Special skills in observation, social analysis and group management are thus required.</p> <p>In many situations, the results of the focus groups have to be triangulated through other participatory mechanisms.</p>
<b>Individual interviews</b>	
<p>Individual interviews and the collection of eyewitness accounts allow for the development of a more intimate view of the issues at stake and engender awareness of ideas that might not be easily expressed in larger groupings or in public.</p>	<p>It is rather time-consuming and requires both discretion and sensitivity, given the protection issues that could arise.</p>
<b>Surveys</b>	
<p>Participatory surveys are an essential tool. A prerequisite for their success is joint elaboration of objectives, the drafting of questionnaires, and collective identification of the quantitative sample.</p>	<p>Questionnaires have to be simple and culturally adapted. The survey team has to be chosen in a participatory manner in order to avoid post-survey claims of bias and complaints.</p>
<b>Mechanisms to protect anonymity</b>	
<p>In some contexts, certain issues (such as human-rights violations, especially against women or children) may require participatory mechanisms that protect anonymity. Anonymous questionnaires, for example, which can be collected discreetly and put back in public boxes or sent through the mail, can be used in certain situations.</p>	<p>Discretion and caution are sometimes vital to the survival of those individuals who have been ready to participate. Unfortunately, this hinders double-checking and the triangulation of certain information.</p>
<b>Monitoring days</b>	
<p>Visits to programmes, 'open days' and field trips to different communities, followed by discussion and social events, are very interesting ways to stimulate exchanges and to extract opinions.</p>	<p>While these are both time- and resource-consuming initiatives, they are very effective (if not necessarily efficient).</p>
<b>Feedback mechanisms</b>	
<p>Providing feedback to stakeholders is central to participatory monitoring. The groups, committees and mechanisms established for monitoring constitute very good channels for providing either an oral or written response. In most instances, a preferred option is to hold a meeting where there can be discussion about the exercise, its methodology, its findings and how the recommendations will be implemented.</p>	<p>Feedback is a risky endeavour if the capacity to implement changes required as a result of the monitoring process is low.</p> <p>Both successes and failures have to be acknowledged.</p> <p>All stakeholders should be formally invited.</p>

Where acceptable intermediaries do not emerge or cannot be identified, it is necessary to identify what culturally and socially acceptable collective problem-solving mechanisms exist, and to negotiate how to work with them.

### **B Establishing a steering committee**

Where there already is a certain amount of social organisation and a practice of electing or designating committees, setting up a steering committee for the monitoring process can be a very effective way of ensuring the existence of an independent, but well-accepted and well-respected, monitoring mechanism. But beware of the tendency for 'committology'! Aid agencies can create committees that have no roots in the social setting, and, therefore, have a low level of legitimacy.

### **C Working through traditional assemblies**

This is extremely useful in ensuring that the population can be informed through existing communication channels. Hence, information should be available in local languages and via culturally acceptable media.

In such cases, the role of your cultural bridge—for expatriates, this can be a translator—is essential. His/her personality, the way he/she is perceived, and his/her capacity to create empathy will significantly affect the quality of the dialogue and the reality regarding local stakeholder involvement in the monitoring process. It is vital that these fora are also used for feedback exercises throughout the monitoring process.

 Last, but not least, working through these traditional mechanisms implies a commitment that conclusions and recommendations will have a visible impact on the project. Otherwise, people can feel betrayed.

### **D Working with social-control mechanisms**

Make sure that everyone is aware of the programme design and their entitlement, such that people who feel unhappy or betrayed can always complain. This is monitoring through social control.

While very effective in certain societies, this can lead to more problems than it solves in other settings, creating tension amongst the population. For instance, social-control mechanisms are important in validating choices, ensuring opportunities to control corruption and inequity, and limiting the risk of nepotism and patronage. Full transparency, from the design stage to the monitoring phase, is critical for social-control mechanisms to function.

 Security and protection issues that might affect those in charge of the promotion of social-control mechanisms are the main potential counter-indicator to social control.

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### 6.4.4 LISTENING ... TO THE VOICELESS, THE DISCONTENTED, THE 'COMPETITORS' ...

#### **A Listening to various perspectives ...**

In the midst of participation, certain groups tend to be overshadowed. These usually comprise the poor, the landless, the discontented and people of the 'wrong' age, gender, cast and ethnic group. It is important to ensure that the entire participatory process takes into account their existence, their needs and their views, notably in relation to monitoring activities.

- **The voiceless** These people are not represented in the leadership; they are often not, or only loosely, organised; they are simply too afraid to speak. Make sure that the process does not leave them behind! But think of their security and protection before encouraging them too strongly to go public. If this precaution is not straightforward and clear, people are likely not to get involved, or they may be taking risks if they do so.
- **The voice of the 'discontented'** This group usually has two types of reaction: either they are forcefully vocal; or they discretely leave the programme. Even if a group of unsatisfied stakeholders tries

to monopolise the discussion, do not forget to include the silent group.

- **The voice of the 'competitors'** Knowing what other agencies and actors in the same field think of the programme is another very useful component of participatory monitoring. It is crucial to incorporate these views into the debate with the main stakeholders – that is, those assisted by the programme. Sometimes, the fact that one point has been raised by another agency can open up new avenues of debate and prevent what could have been a dangerous 'face-to-face' confrontation between the aid provider and the recipient.

## **B Managing claims and complaints through participation**

Participatory management of claims and complaints is one possible process to be included in programme monitoring. In relation to distribution processes, for instance, there are always discontented people, even if they have had the opportunity to request to be on the target list. Accusations of unjust inclusion of certain families, or unfair treatment of others, will always be levelled. An ad hoc participatory mechanism might have to be thought through well in advance, and established on time to deal with this.

One way to proceed with the design of a claims/complaints mechanism is through a series of focus groups, composed of a representative sample of the population, in terms of gender and age. This exercise should be followed by a large-scale public campaign to make people aware of the decisions that have been made. An alternative is to identify and work through local 'problem-solving' mechanisms and authorities.

*In Somalia, there are several accepted problem-solving processes and instruments for redress. They are often controlled by intra-clan or inter-clan mechanisms, which have proved to be resilient and are well respected. They are based on a system of values, rules and duties, which is enshrined in a*

traditional law known in the north of Somalia as 'Xer Issa'—the Law of the Tree.

In Rwanda, the traditional system is the *Gacaca*, which was reactivated as a reconciliation mechanism following the 1994 genocide.

## 6.5 THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATORY MONITORING

### 6.5.1 INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSPARENCY

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Given the fact that participatory monitoring is a time-consuming undertaking, the population will be willing to commit itself on a continued basis only if the flow of information is fluid, and the data are relevant and consistent.

This can take various forms: notice boards; public meetings; distribution of leaflets; and public announcements through the media.

 Maintaining a transparent and continuous flow of information on monitoring is not without certain dangers. Indeed, it publicises errors and failures and constraints and difficulties, as much as it does successes! It might also underline certain responsibilities and specific attitudes of key stakeholders. Putting this in the public arena can be risky. So be careful and do not be 'over-communicative'!

### 6.5.2 MONITORING SHOULD LEAD TO ACTION

 A basic piece of advice is: do not get involved in participatory monitoring if your organisation is not ready to take it seriously, to listen to the results, and to act on them.

### 6.5.3 TIME MANAGEMENT

Monitoring can be extremely time-consuming for aid actors, for local leaders and for the population. Furthermore, although the population's enthusiasm for the project and its willingness to be involved is strong in the early stages, the momentum is gradually lost, especially when difficulties and delays occur in the implementation phase, making it more difficult to encourage people to participate. Be careful not to overdo it!

The same people often take responsibility for organising and structuring initiatives and for being the interface with external agencies. In **Colombia**, these local leaders are so overstretched that they have difficulty feeding their families. Their motivation may occasionally lie in power dynamics and ambition, but, most frequently, it is the result of genuine commitment and a degree of pressure from the population, which recognises the person who can best defend its interest. This can lead to burn out and to lack of efficiency of key participants.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION: PARTICIPATORY MONITORING, A 'PLUS' IN MANAGEMENT

Participatory monitoring is not a simple process, but, if it is implemented well, it can contribute, to a large extent, to your programme's success. The main issues that need to be addressed in relation to participatory monitoring, and the tools available to do so, are summarised below.

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF MONITORING STRATEGY

Did you involve the various stakeholders in the design of the monitoring process, in order to define:

- objectives?
- indicators?
- the stakeholders involved?
- the methods to be used?
- the means required?

Focus group on the design of the monitoring methodology

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONITORING

Three steps: information collection; feedback and decision-making; and the use of results

### Information collection

Did you manage to involve all stakeholders?

Did you manage to hear all of their voices?

Were the participatory tools appropriate?

Are the quantity and quality of the information collected adequate for the monitoring exercise?

### Feedback

How will the evaluation results be fed back to the population?

### Use of results

How will the results be used?

Will recommendations and decisions made be acted on?

Working with a partner

Establishment of a steering committee

Working through traditional structures

Social-control mechanisms

Focus group on the evolution of the situation and needs

Structured and semi-structured interviews

Surveys

Storytelling

Box for the collection of complaints

Social audit

Monitoring days

Focus groups on programme adaptation

Communication and information tools

## KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATORY MONITORING

### **Information sharing and transparency**

Did you inform people sufficiently and at the appropriate time?

### **Linking monitoring with action**

Is the exercise satisfactory in view of changes in the situation and to needs?  
Is it necessary to identify new ways of re-adjusting the programme?

### **Time management**

Is the monitoring process time-effective and will it lead to changes?

### Evaluation of the monitoring process

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## CHAPTER 7

# EVALUATION

### 🎯 Objective of Chapter 7

By the end of this chapter, you should feel comfortable engaging in a participatory evaluation process, using a series of tools and approaches, and paying attention to key cross-cutting issues (security and protection, discrimination and minorities, and impartiality and independence).

## 7.1 APPROACHING PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Evaluation of humanitarian programmes is still a relatively recent feature; participatory evaluation remains the exception rather than the rule. This stage is essential, however, to extract the lessons to be learned, and to capitalise on them. They can concern both the project process itself, and the participation strategy that is being put in place.

There are various forms of evaluation, depending on who commissions it and who carries it out. Although a participatory approach can be adopted for all types of evaluation, it does not necessarily entail the same level of stakeholder involvement.

## A few examples from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

### Evaluation of an international NGO's programme by a local organisation

Goal Team Consult (GOTEC), a Congolese organisation, was asked to 'evaluate the socio-economic impact of the reconstruction of the Sake–Masisi trunk road and other interventions in favour of populations of this region, undertaken by Agro Action Allemande (AAA)'.

Focus groups and interviews (using a questionnaire) were among the various approaches utilised in the evaluation. The people who asked to attend the focus groups were 'people ... who had a certain influence in the community leadership, notably local development committee members, traditional authorities and political-administrative authorities, teachers, nurses, health centre workers, church ministers, etc.'

### Evaluation carried out by head office

Oxfam carried out an evaluation of all of its activities established following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano. Criteria included the use of participatory techniques and the results of participation. Coordination and cooperation with other organisations were also subject to review.

'The primary sources (for the evaluation) were notably interviews ... with partners and beneficiaries [sic], (which were carried out) in the field with key participants (such as public health promoters, supervisors, health committees, volunteers, nurses and civil servants from the health zone (zone de santé), discussion groups, informal interviews with beneficiaries and site visits.'

### Evaluation carried out by the donor

The Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB) funded the Volontaires Autochtones Solidaires (VAS), a Congolese organisation working with the Kalongue community. When the programme was complete, a NOVIB commission visited the Kalongue authorities, as well as officials and organised groups. One member of the participatory evaluation team spoke fluent Swahili and was thus able to communicate directly with the population.

### 7.1.1 A FEW WORDS OF CAUTION: KEY CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

#### **A Security and protection**

Evaluation processes, due to their retrospective and analytical nature, often lead to the identification of problems, errors and responsibility, all of which are delicate subjects, where potential danger may loom for those involved. As a result, they need to be handled with care. The lives of people in charge of evaluation processes through social-control mechanisms, for example, can be put in jeopardy, especially in contexts of political crisis or armed conflict. They must, therefore, be selected carefully and supported in this task. Being a source of information can also be risky. Preserving the anonymity of informants, during surveys of the population, can provide a certain amount of protection.

#### **? KEY QUESTIONS**

- How can I ensure that the evaluation process does not create security problems for the people involved?
- How can I ensure that the evaluation process takes programme-related security and protection issues into account?
- When necessary, how can I ensure that the anonymity of informants engaged in the evaluation process is respected?

#### **B Discrimination and minorities**

Evaluation should pay attention to whether the programme has led to the inclusion or the exclusion of particular groups. This entails listening to those who are often 'voiceless', because they are marginalised, or because they cannot attend community assemblies, for instance. Creating the space for them to speak out is a delicate undertaking, which should consider the consequences that these people may face as a result, such as risks to their security or further stigmatisation. (See section 5.5.2.)

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I ensure that the evaluation process will record the views of marginalised groups?
- How can I ensure that poorly assisted groups will not be further marginalised or stigmatised due to the fact that they have complained openly during the evaluation?

### C **Impartiality and independence**

Being impartial and independent at this stage essentially entails listening 'to all sides' and gathering together the perspectives of different population groups, which may perceive an intervention in different ways. Conducting focus groups and interviews, in a range of areas that have been affected by the intervention, and being transparent throughout the process, is one possible way of reaching various parts of the population concerned.

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## ? KEY QUESTIONS

- How can I ensure that the views of all groups and stakeholders are taken into account?
- How can I ensure that, by acting on certain recommendations, I am not being manipulated by certain groups?

### 7.1.2 FROM CONSULTATION TO FACILITATION

Here, again, the different levels and forms of participation chosen will have a bearing on the operation. Three approaches to participatory evaluation are described below.

**Table 15** The instrumental, collaborative and supportive approaches to participation in the final evaluation

Description	Potential benefits	Risks	Reminder
<b>Instrumental</b>			
Consultation with various stakeholders	<p>Taking into account the perceptions of the population</p> <p>Enhanced learning and accountability capacity for your organisation</p> <p>You can consult with groups that would be excluded in a participatory process</p>	<p>You can be exposed to many complaints and demands</p> <p>Low level of trust; people do not provide constructive information</p>	<p>Inform people of the objective of the exercise</p> <p>Provide feedback on the results of the evaluation</p> <p>Explain how the information will be used</p> <p>Be ready to deal with complaints</p>
<b>Collaborative</b>			
Evaluation carried out jointly by your organisation and a structure associated with the affected population (local NGO or CBO, for instance)	<p>Taking into account the perceptions of the population</p> <p>Reinforcing local capacities (good in situations where there are recurring crises)</p> <p>Consolidating trust; can strengthen opportunities to work together again in future</p>	<p>Loss of impartiality, depending on choice of partner</p> <p>Can increase cost and time required</p> <p>Transparency may be more difficult for a local institution to achieve</p> <p>Local institutions may be more reluctant to share negative results with the local population</p>	<p>If needed, train local partners, focussing on purpose and methods of evaluation, and the participatory tools that can be used</p> <p>The results of the evaluation should be shared and accepted by all parties involved</p> <p>Difficulties should be managed jointly</p>
<b>Supportive</b>			
Evaluation carried out by the affected population or by an associated structure	<p>Reinforcing the weight and recognition of local capacities</p> <p>Enhancing and strengthening the learning and accountability of the local structure</p> <p>Building of trust between the local structure and potential donors</p>	<p>Local structures and populations that initiate their own projects may not necessarily consider the need to engage in evaluation processes</p> <p>Local structures may be reluctant to share negative results with the population and with donors</p>	<p>Know the context and the people you are supporting well</p> <p>If needed, train people, focussing on the purpose and methods of evaluation, and the participatory tools that can be used</p> <p>As an external agency, your role may be one of facilitator, offering guidance on setting up and implementing participatory evaluation</p>

## 7.2 PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION: KEY PRINCIPLES

The evaluation process is a rich, yet risky undertaking for the affected population and local actors. The external aid actor has to be ready to be criticised!

In addition, it is important to accept that the population and their local representatives might challenge known 'good practices' in relation to evaluation. The typical criteria of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and connectedness, for example) might have to be reinterpreted to match the views of stakeholders involved in the participatory process!

2

Figure 23 Views of stakeholders on the criteria for evaluation



Key principles of participatory evaluation:

**Principle 1** Participation in evaluation has little meaning if the population or local actors have not been involved much earlier in the project cycle—that is, in the assessment and implementation phases.

**Principle 2** One has to be ready to accept that programmes will be measured against criteria put forward by the population and local actors. They do not necessarily fit neatly with criteria imposed by the donor or the aid agency's headquarters, or with internationally recognised standards.

**Principle 3** If evaluation processes are just mechanisms to ensure compliance, then they will remain simple information-collection exercises. The frustration of local stakeholders can be great.

**Principle 4** Transparency in evaluation processes has to be very high, from the drafting of the 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) to discussion of the conclusions and recommendations. It is thus important to communicate on all aspects of these processes and to try to engage in bottom-up, rather than top-down, dynamics.

**Principle 5** It should be made clear from the outset that evaluation processes do not seek to apply sanctions—so that the process is based on trust and empathy, and to encourage participation.

2

## 7.3 THE PROCESS

Participatory evaluation is a three-step exercise, which normally occurs at the end of the project, or at key stages where reorientation is possible.

- ▶ Because it is a multi-stakeholder, complex exercise, it is important to define clearly a navigation process for the evaluation as a whole. This can involve, for instance, a steering committee, composed of representatives of different stakeholder constituencies.

The three steps are set out below.

**Step 1 Design of the evaluation process.** This entails:

- defining the object (programme, strategy or process, for example) to be assessed and the aims of the evaluation;
- identifying the stakeholders who will be involved and delineating their role;
- outlining the methods that will be used;
- identifying the means available and determining how they will be distributed; and
- deciding how the process results will be utilised.

**Step 2 The actual evaluation process.** This includes:

- field work;
- consultation with the various stakeholders; and
- collective debate and discussion.

**Step 3 The feedback (to stakeholders) process.** Questions can include:

- how can a steering committee be established to oversee final feedback?
- how can we ensure proper feedback to the affected population?

These steps are usually described in the ToR, which can be elaborated in a participatory manner.

## 7.4 DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Participatory design of the evaluation, and participatory elaboration of the ToR that result from the design process, are not necessarily complex. They should occur in a focus group, during which brainstorming generates ideas.

**Table 16** Elements that need to be defined in the ToR for the evaluation

Elements	Key questions
<b>Definition of the purpose of the evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it to assess the programme's relevance from the perspective of the affected population, and to gauge whether needs have changed or not?</li> <li>Is it to identify the effects of the intervention on a specific set of problems?</li> <li>Is it to be informed of the quality of the programme?</li> <li>Is it to be aware of the programme's impact?</li> <li>Is to adapt the intervention to the actual situation?</li> <li>Is it to compare how activities have evolved in relation to the initial action plan?</li> <li>Is it to initiate a learning process, aimed at preventing errors from being repeated?</li> <li>Is it to discover the population's level of satisfaction?</li> </ul>
<b>Identification of the different stakeholders in a participatory evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there local mechanisms or institutions, accepted and recognised by the population, which could play the role of 'intermediary' between the population and the aid organisation in the evaluation process?</li> <li>Is it preferable to engage directly with the population?</li> <li>Will it be necessary, for practical reasons, to engineer the emergence of local intermediaries?</li> </ul>

continued ►

**Table 16** Elements that need to be defined in the ToR for the evaluation *continued*

Elements	Key questions
<b>Definition of methods to be used</b>	<p>Is it possible partly to incorporate the evaluation within traditional decision-making and problem-solving mechanisms?</p> <p>Are there existing and known social-control systems and is it possible to use them in the evaluation process?</p> <p>Is it possible to identify collectively an analytical framework for the evaluation, including the identification of evaluation criteria, indicators and benchmarks?</p>
<b>Definition of how the evaluation will be implemented</b>	<p>Will the process be implemented directly or in partnership with a local actor?</p> <p>In the latter case, what will the terms of the contract be?</p> <p>Which participatory tools will be used?</p> <p>How can we ensure that certain 'voiceless' groups are not excluded from the process?</p> <p>Will the process be credible and safe enough for the 'discontented' to express themselves without fear?</p> <p>Will the process be perceived as rigorous enough for its conclusions to be credible?</p>
<b>Feedback</b>	<p>Will feedback be provided to the affected population at the end of the evaluation?</p> <p>Will a specific session(s) be organised for this purpose?</p> <p>Will there be enough time for people to assimilate the findings and to react?</p>
<b>Use of the results</b>	<p>How will participants be informed of how their views have been taken into account?</p> <p>Is it possible to set up a participatory system to follow up on implementation of the recommendations produced by the evaluation?</p> <p>How can the safety of those groups involved in the evaluation process be guaranteed, and the risks of stigmatisation or social tension be minimised?</p>

## 7.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION

### 7.5.1 THE TOOLS AVAILABLE

Certain tools have been experimented with and are seen as potentially useful and effective for participatory evaluation. They are listed below, along with their specific objectives and advantages, as well as their limitations and constraints.

**Table 17** Tools available to conduct a participatory evaluation

Objectives and advantages	Limitations and constraints
<b>Focus groups, roundtables and meetings</b>	
<p>Enable open discussions to take place</p> <p>Help to reinforce links with the community and to create a climate of trust</p> <p>Depending on the issue, it is necessary either to have good representation of different segments of the population (in terms of age, gender, activity and social group) or to have strata-specific groups</p> <p>Note that sensitive subjects like HIV or breastfeeding practices are not discussed in the same fora as road building and security!</p>	<p>Sometimes these techniques can lead to the masking of the views of those who do not dare to speak</p> <p>Special skills in observation, social analysis and group management are thus required</p> <p>In many situations, the results of the focus groups have to be triangulated through other participatory mechanisms</p>
<b>Individual interviews</b>	
<p>Individual interviews and the collection of eyewitness accounts allow for the development of a more intimate view of the issues at stake and engender awareness of ideas that might not be easily expressed in larger groupings or in public</p>	<p>It is rather time-consuming and requires both discretion and sensitivity, given the protection issues that could arise from this practice</p>
<b>Surveys</b>	
<p>Participatory surveys are an essential tool. A prerequisite for their success is joint elaboration of objectives, the drafting of questionnaires, and collective identification of the quantitative sample</p>	<p>Questionnaires have to be simple and culturally adapted. The survey team has to be chosen in a participatory manner in order to avoid post-survey claims of bias and complaints</p>
<b>Mechanisms to protect anonymity</b>	
<p>In some contexts, certain issues (such as human-rights violations, especially against women or children) may require participatory mechanisms that protect anonymity. Anonymous questionnaires, for example, which can be collected discreetly and put back in public boxes or sent through the mail, can be used in certain situations</p>	<p>Discretion and caution are sometimes vital to the survival of those individuals who have been ready to participate. Unfortunately, this hinders double-checking and the triangulation of certain information</p>

continued ►

**Table 17** Tools available to conduct a participatory evaluation *continued*

Objectives and advantages	Limitations and constraints
<b>Evaluation days</b>	
Visits to programmes, 'open days' and field trips to different communities, followed by discussion and social events, are very interesting ways to stimulate exchanges and to extract opinions	While these are both time- and resource-consuming initiatives, they are very effective (if not necessarily efficient)
<b>Social audit by an external evaluator</b>	
Social audits, <i>inter alia</i> , are a very useful way of garnering the views of stakeholders. Although not always very 'participatory' in terms of implementation, they can be very participatory at the time when the findings are released and discussed	These exercises are not necessarily cheap and quick. It is recommended, therefore, that you include a line in the budget. They are totally useless if conducted only for public-relations reasons and are not followed by action. Their design and implementation require special skills in the areas of sociology and anthropology
<b>Feedback mechanisms</b>	
Providing feedback to stakeholders is central to participatory evaluation. The groups, committees and mechanisms established for the evaluation constitute very good channels for providing either an oral or written response. In most instances, a preferred option is to hold a meeting where there can be discussion about the exercise, its methodology, its findings and how the recommendations will be implemented	Feedback is a risky endeavour if the capacity to implement changes required as a result of the evaluation process is low  Both successes and failures have to be acknowledged  All stakeholders should be formally invited

2

### 7.5.2 PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION ... WITH WHOM?

#### A Choosing your partner

In regard to evaluation, it is very important to choose the most appropriate partner. Control of, or involvement in, an evaluation process can be a source of power. Certain choices can have detrimental consequences. Structures that are perceived as non-representative, or are known to have inappropriate past records, have to be avoided at all cost. Structures that cannot access key segments of the population (women and other ethnic groups, for instance) should be utilised in conjunction with other structures, which do not suffer the same limitations.

 In addition, care should be taken to ensure that structures involved in the participatory evaluation do not abuse the opportunity in order to gain power over the population or other institutions; structures that

might have vested interests or hidden agendas should thus be avoided. This is an especially sensitive matter in a context of armed conflict.

Where acceptable intermediaries do not emerge or cannot be identified, it is necessary to identify what culturally and socially acceptable collective problem-solving mechanisms exist, and to negotiate how to work with them.

### **B Working through traditional assemblies**

This is extremely useful to ensure that the population can be informed through existing communication channels. Hence, information should be available in local languages and in culturally acceptable media.

In such cases, the role of your cultural bridge—for expatriates, this can be a translator—is essential. His/her personality, the way he/she is perceived, and his/her capacity to create empathy will significantly affect the quality of the dialogue and the reality of local stakeholder involvement in the evaluation. It is vital that these fora are also used for feedback exercises throughout the evaluation process.

- ▲ Last, but not least, working through these traditional mechanisms implies a commitment that conclusions and recommendations will have a visible impact on the project. Otherwise, people can feel betrayed.

### **C Social control mechanisms**

Social-control mechanisms are important in validating choices, ensuring opportunities to control corruption and inequity, and in limiting the risk of nepotism and patronage. Full transparency, from the design to the evaluation phase, is critical for social-control mechanisms to function effectively.

- ▲ Security and protection issues that might affect those in charge of the promotion of social-control mechanism are the main potential counter-indicators to the stimulation of social control.

### 7.5.3 LISTENING ... TO THE VOICELESS, THE DISCONTENTED, THE 'COMPETITORS'

In the midst of participation, certain groups tend to be overshadowed. These usually comprise the poor, the landless, the discontented and people of the 'wrong' age, gender, cast and ethnic group. It is important to ensure that the entire participatory process takes into account their existence, their needs and their views, notably in the evaluation.

- **The voiceless** These people are not represented in the leadership; they are often not, or only loosely, organised; they are simply too afraid to speak. Make sure that the process does not leave them behind! But think of their security and protection before encouraging them too strongly to go public. If this precaution is not straightforward and clear, people are likely not to get involved, or they may be taking risks if they do so.
- **The voice of the 'discontented'** This group usually has two types of reaction: either they are forcefully vocal; or they discretely leave the programme. Even if a group of unsatisfied stakeholders tries to monopolise the discussion, do not forget to include the silent group.
- **The voice of the 'competitors'** Knowing what other agencies and actors in the same field think of the programme is another very useful component of participatory evaluation. It is crucial to incorporate their views into the debate with the main stakeholders - that is, those assisted by the programme. Sometimes, the fact that one point has been raised by another agency, can open up new avenues of debate and prevent what could have been a dangerous 'face-to-face' confrontation between the aid provider and aid recipient.

## 7.6 THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

### 7.6.1 INFORMATION SHARING AND TRANSPARENCY

Given the fact that participatory evaluation is a time-consuming undertaking, the population will be willing to commit itself on a continued basis only if the flow of information is fluid, the data are relevant and consistent, and proper feedback on the results occurs at the end.

This can take various forms: public meetings; notice boards; distribution of leaflets; and public announcements through the media.

The key question concerning the organisation of feedback mechanisms is:

- how can I ensure that feedback is provided to all key stakeholders involved in the programme and evaluation process?

 Maintaining a transparent flow of information on evaluation is not without certain dangers. Indeed, it publicises errors and failures and constraints and difficulties, as much as it does successes! It might also underline certain responsibilities and specific attitudes of key stakeholders. Putting this in the public arena can be risky. So be careful and do not be 'over-communicative'!

### 7.6.2 LESSONS LEARNED HAVE TO BECOME LESSONS USED

A basic piece of advice is: do not get involved in participatory evaluation if your organisation is not ready to take it seriously, to listen to the results, and to act on them.

Key questions include:

- how will participants be informed of how their views have been taken into account?
- will there be a 'post-evaluation' participatory programme review and will adjustments to planning be made?
- is it possible to set up a participatory system to follow up on implementation of the recommendations produced by the evaluation?

### 7.6.3 TIME MANAGEMENT

Participatory evaluations can be extremely time-consuming for aid actors, for local leaders and for the population. Furthermore, although the population's enthusiasm for the project and its willingness to be involved is strong in the early phases, momentum is gradually lost. At the end of the programme, when people expect less input from the aid agency, they may question whether it will have an interest in spending time on a participatory evaluation.

- ▶ So make sure that you use participants' time effectively, and that they clearly understand why their input is important!

## 7.7 CONCLUSION: ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

Participatory evaluation involves complex processes that require time and humility. It processes can bring about amazing results, if implemented in a way that takes into account all the characteristics of the crisis and the post-crisis situation.

Key questions concerning the three steps of a participatory evaluation are presented below, along with the tools available to tackle them.

## DESIGN AND ELABORATION OF THE ToR

Did you involve the various stakeholders in the design of the evaluation process, including elaboration of the ToR, in order to define:

- the objectives?
- the stakeholders involved?
- the methods to be used?
- the means required?

Focus group on the ToR and design of the evaluation methodology

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION

Did you manage to involve all of the stakeholders?

Did you manage to hear all of their voices?

Did you inform people sufficiently and at the apposite time?

Were the participatory tools appropriate?

Are the quantity and quality of the information collected adequate for the evaluation exercise?

Establishment of a steering committee

Focus group on impact analysis

Structured and semi-structured interviews

Surveys

Institutional analysis

Storytelling

Box for the collection of complaints

Social audit

## FEEDBACK TO THE AFFECTED POPULATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EVALUATION

Was the exercise satisfactory in view of the ToR?

How will the evaluation results be fed back to the population?

Is the evaluation exercise a time-effective process that leads to changes where necessary?

Focus groups

General meetings with larger groups from the affected population

Communication and information tools

Surveys

## CONCLUSION OF PART 2

Participation can trigger major quality improvement mechanisms in regard to humanitarian action. But it has to be done with the utmost care, sensitivity and sense of responsibility, in often turbulent, sometimes dangerous, and, in most instances, complex crisis and post-crisis contexts. There is room for participatory practices in all phases of the project cycle.

There are tools to achieve this. Some can be used only in a specific phase of the project cycle, while others have a much broader field of application (see the table below). The main tools available have been described in the second part of this handbook. A specialist on participation can most likely identify more tools, and even make highly original use of the toolbox presented in this handbook. Once you feel comfortable using these tools, feel free to experiment! Participation is a state of mind, which entails sensitive creativity.

**Table 18** The range of tools presented and their application in the project cycle

Tools	Assessment	Design	Implementation	Monitoring	Evaluation
Historical timeline	●				
Mapping	●	●	●	●	●
Transect walk	●	●			●
Seasonal activity calendar	●	●	●	●	●
Daily schedule	●	●			●
Institutional analysis	●	●		●	●
Crisis analysis	●				
Wealth-ranking analysis	●	●	●	●	●
Economic process analysis	●	●		●	●
Capacity and Vulnerability Analysis	●	●		●	●
Proportional piling	●	●	●	●	●
Storytelling	●			●	●
Role play	●			●	●

# PART 3

## Sector Related Issues

### © Objective of Part 3

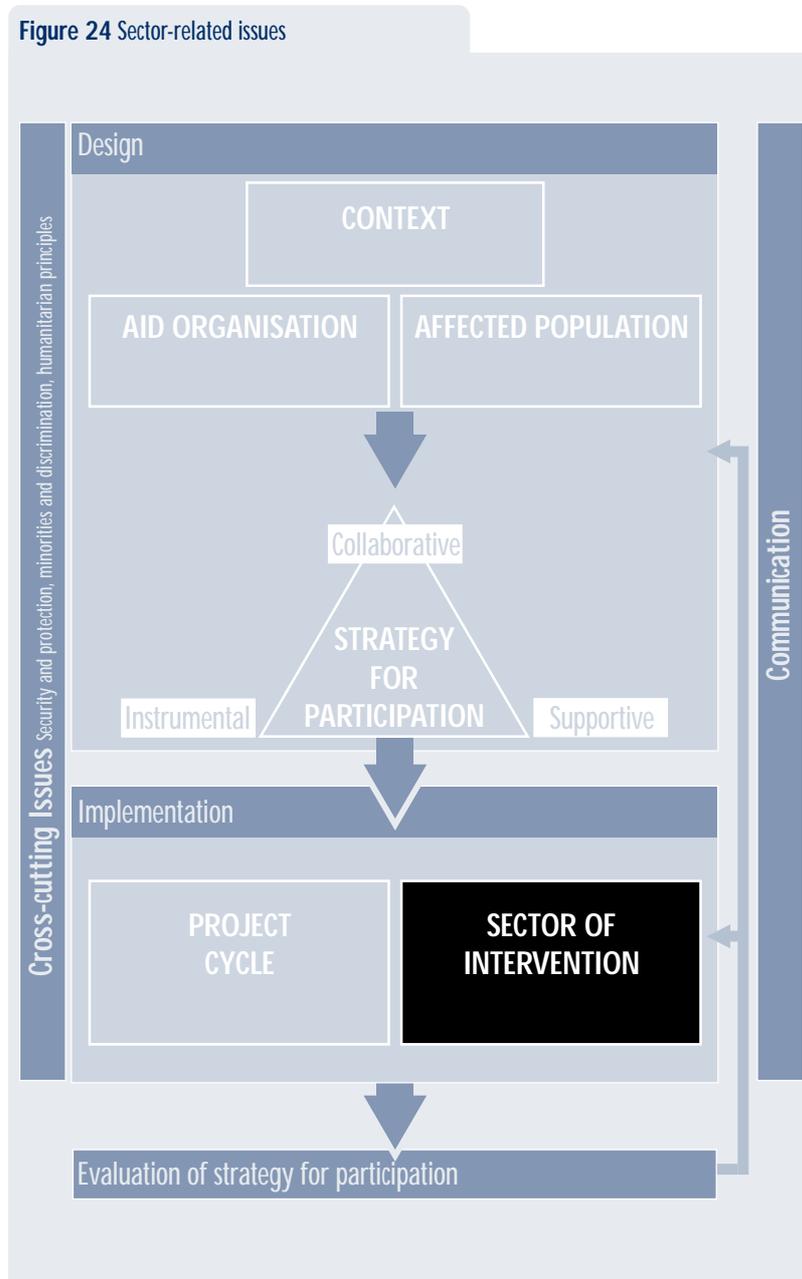
Part 3 places the generic information provided to date in the context of specific sectors that relate to humanitarian interventions. By the end of Part 3, you should have a concrete understanding of how to operationalise your participation strategy in particular sectors.

The idea of citizen participation is a bit like eating spinach.

In principle, nobody is against it, because it is supposed to be good for the health

*Sherry Arnstein, 1969*

Figure 24 Sector-related issues



## CHAPTER 8

# PARTICIPATION AND FOOD SECURITY

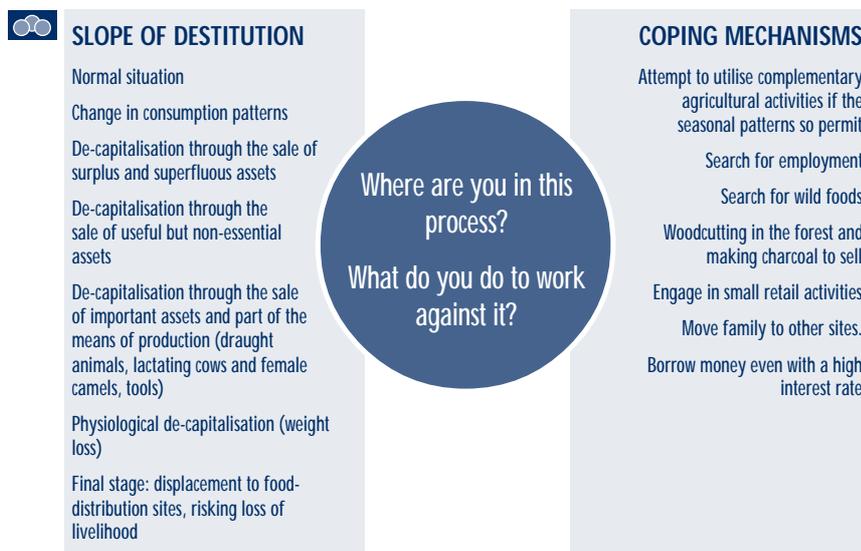
### REMINDER

In regard to all food-security interventions, it is important to consider the cross-cutting issues concerning **security and protection, minorities and impartiality and independence**. If planning to distribute food, for instance, you may find that people will refuse it, for fear of attracting looters. When targeting the most 'vulnerable' groups, you may find that they share their ration with non-targeted groups, which may reveal, for example, existing patronage relationships, patterns of indebtedness, or local social-security systems ('I give you when I have, you give me when you have'). It is important to be aware of such dynamics before engaging in programme implementation.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING COPING AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

In the food-security sector, in particular, it is vital to understand local practices and to appreciate local knowledge, notably the dynamics surrounding destitution and the way that the population tries to mitigate them via coping and survival strategies. **Understanding these practices and mechanisms is your first step**, regardless of the type of programme envisaged (food aid, nutrition or agricultural rehabilitation), since the objective is to pinpoint pertinent interventions for a given context. The analysis of coping strategies should allow you to identify the main problems and potential solutions.

This can be done through a series of exercises largely inspired by PRA techniques. A useful starting point may be to fill in and develop the following graph, using focus groups. It is useful to convene two kinds of focus groups, gender-specific and mixed groups, so as to compare the strategies of males and females.



3

The second step is to position these phenomena on a timeline, as presented below.

Understanding patterns of resilience and coping strategies is vital. The tool known as the 'pillars of survival' is very powerful in identifying and establishing a hierarchy of different strategies (see chapter 4, section 4.2).

### Exercise 18 Coping mechanisms timeline

#### Objective

The goal is to situate in time the progression between the various coping mechanisms put in place by the affected population.

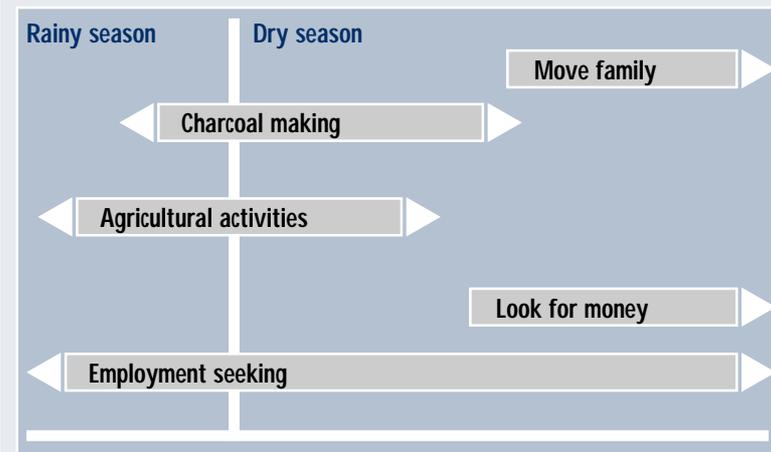
#### Participants

This can be done through focus groups, representative of the affected population as a whole, or disaggregated by gender, socio-economic status or ethnic group, if there are differences in their coping mechanisms. An initial timeline can be prepared earlier with key informants, to triangulate the information collected through focus groups.

**Step 1** Define the period to be covered with the participants (since the beginning of the crisis, for example). To do this, you can refer to the historical timeline and seasonal activity calendars if they have been elaborated beforehand (see chapter 3)

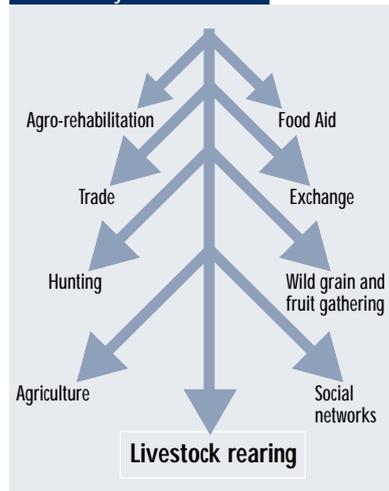
**Step 2** Place the various coping mechanisms of the participants on the timeline

**Step 3** Present the completed timeline to the participants, and open up the discussion. For instance: 'Have any coping mechanisms been omitted?' 'What will the main activities be in the forthcoming season?'





### The pillars of survival and food security in south Sudan



An example of the pillars of survival in the context of south Sudan is presented below. Livestock rearing is the basis of participants' livelihoods. Other strategies and coping mechanisms, by order of importance, include agriculture, support through social networks, hunting and wild grain and fruit gathering, trade, exchange, agricultural rehabilitation and, finally, food aid.

## 3

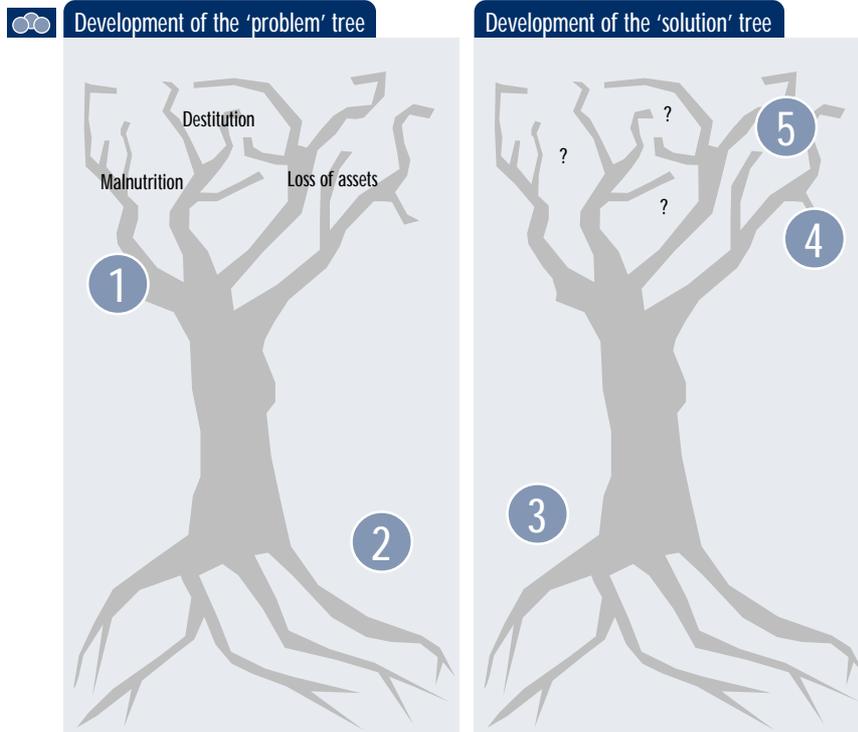
It is essential at this stage to establish a clear '**problem tree**' to inform the development of an appropriate '**solution tree**'. In relation to food security, the five phases of a participatory problem tree/solution tree focus-group exercise are as follows.

### Problem tree

- 1 Identify observable and recordable problems that result in food insecurity.
- 2 Identify direct and indirect causes.

### Solution tree

- 3 Restate clearly the causes of food insecurity.
- 4 Work out possible solutions to tackle the causes of food insecurity.
- 5 Assess the potential negative and positive impacts of possible solutions.



It is only after these exercises have been carried out that you can decide which type of intervention is most appropriate. Food-security interventions often consist of food aid, nutrition programmes and/or agricultural rehabilitation (as seen below), but this list is not exhaustive. Do not hesitate to be open to original suggestions from the affected population, or to look for interesting solutions in other intervention spheres.

## 8.2 PARTICIPATION IN FOOD-AID PROGRAMMES

It is generally considered that participation in emergency relief—the most common type being food-aid programmes—is not possible or is unnecessary. Participation is not common practice in a sector servicing large populations and for which all kinds of standards and protocols have been developed.

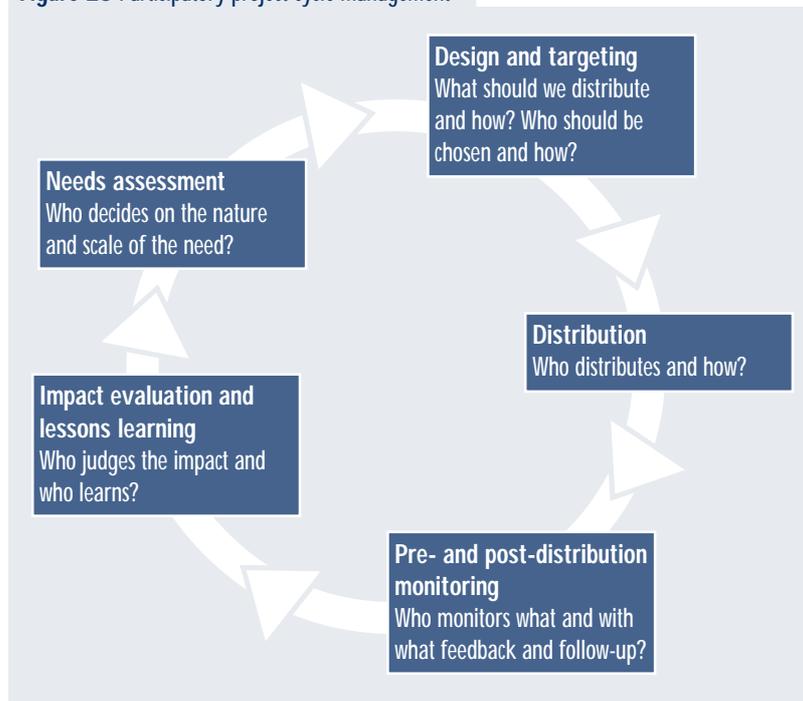
The potential benefits of engaging with the affected population largely support the need to be participatory in regard to food-aid programmes, even in 'emergency' situations: more relevant and culturally-appropriate choices of foods and target groups, enhanced time and cost-effectiveness and efficiency of distributions, and establishment of a relationship between the aid organisations and the population that is built on mutual respect and confidence. The latter is essential when other programmes are meant to follow or to complement the food distribution.

Meaningful participation is possible at all stage of the process.

3

- assessment;
- design (including targeting);
- distribution;
- monitoring; and
- evaluation.

Figure 25 Participatory project-cycle management



3

### 8.2.1 PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

Although the generic points concerning a participatory assessment were covered in chapter 3, a number of specific elements have to be included as part of a participatory assessment for a food-aid programme. These include:

- gender and age-group specificities in regard to food habits;
- adaptation of the ration in accordance with local habits;
- adaptation of the ration in accordance with available fuel and cooking instruments; and
- protection and security issues relating to food distribution.

Disaggregating information by **gender** is especially important; the organisation of focus groups should be particularly sensitive to gender.

For instance, in many countries, men and women do not eat together and women and children often eat only what remains from the men's meal. There are also specific issues relating to motherhood and child-feeding practices, during and after pregnancy, which cannot be discussed in the presence of men.

- ▶ In many societies, old ladies are excellent speakers on matters concerning women. As they have often been married, have grown-up children and have lived through many experiences, they sometimes dare to speak out in public meetings, where it may be inappropriate for women to do so. Make the most of their presence, and ensure that they are given the chance to speak. In addition, they often are very humorous. Their interventions are frequently memorable!

When it comes to identifying needs, several interesting participatory tools exist for qualifying, quantifying and allocating needs and resources. **Proportional piling** and **ranking** exercises (see chapter 3, section 3.2.3) are the two that are most appropriate to food-aid programmes, since they are easy to implement, even in remote and destitute areas with low literacy rates, and enable a degree of peer control. These exercises are particularly important for the targeting process (see below).

### 3

#### 8.2.2 PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

##### A **Participatory targeting**

As noted in chapter 3, targeting undertaken on the basis of your own views and criteria might lead to culturally and socially unacceptable practices. This is especially the case in clan-based societies, where inclusion in the social-security net is linked to individuals' ability to share when they have, so that they will receive when they do not.

Just outside the distribution sites situated close to the airstrip in **south Sudan**, it is common to see women lay out all that they have just received on nets or directly on the soil, and to share it with assisted and non-assisted

people from the affected population. Although there is no doubt that taxes are probably levied by the local institutions, the main reason for this phenomenon is the need for each woman to remain within the social-security net. 'You share when you have, so that the day you have nothing people will share with you'. Such is the rule of the 'survival game'. Failure to understand this fact, or to deny it, can be a source of considerable frustration, if not of security problems for aid agencies. It requires going back to the assessment and deepening one's comprehension of the social and cultural context.

Practical experience shows that it is often feasible to delegate to local structures responsibility for managing the targeting process and establishing lists of people to be assisted, for the implementation stage. While it can help to save time and to facilitate access and coverage, it also serves to increase the affected population's confidence in the aid organisation, and to ensure that undue tension is not created within the population due to inappropriate targeting.

In the community of La Loma de Bojayá (**Colombia**), one food-distribution exercise was conducted on the basis of an out-of-date census. Consequently, several vulnerable families (including elderly and handicapped people) did not receive aid. The community, via its representatives, complained to the organisation that was distributing the food, and refused to accept the rations. The community requested that a new census be carried out.

As food is a crucial item from the standpoint of both the aid actor and the affected population, the rationale behind the targeting process should be made clear through explanation and discussion with the main stakeholders.

The first step is to re-categorise the population according to the level of need, or to validate an existing typology. Questions to ask include the following.

- Who needs assistance the most?
- Who fits into a second tier among the affected population?

Proportional piling and ranking are the two main tools for participatory wealth ranking.



#### Ranking

Ranking is very useful to identify 'who needs assistance the most?' and 'what is needed?'

#### Proportional piling

Proportional piling can be used to allocate and prioritise distributions on the basis of the needs and quantities that have been identified as being required

It will be important to **triangulate** the results of these exercises, especially through focus groups with various sub-groups, to ensure that part of the affected population has not been excluded, and that the results reflect the reality of the situation. When doing so, it is essential to emphasise that you are consulting the population widely and to explain why, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

An important step in this process is pre-distribution monitoring, which can also be done in a participatory manner (see section 8.2.4).

### 3

#### B Organisation of the distribution

The design of the distribution in terms of content and organisation has been described at length in several manuals. These approaches are anything but participatory and are marked in most instances by suspicion of the affected population and local stakeholders. To engage in participation at this stage can seem challenging, but it is likely to be most rewarding in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the distribution process, and the establishment of a relationship with the affected population that is built on trust and respect.

#### 8.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION

In many situations, especially in refugee camps or areas where the risks of manipulation and diversion are perceived as high, some aid organisations choose to engage in a totally non-participatory process.

**Table 19** The benefits of a participatory approach

Parameters	Benefits
<b>Ration content</b>	What kind of food? In what form? For what type of meal? For whose consumption? These are some of the key questions, even if the answers might challenge protocols on the nutritional composition of rations, and the constraints imposed by donors. A female focus group can shed considerable light on such issues and can help to ensure a more appropriate programme design, by introducing factors like cooking time and wood consumption.
<b>Distribution site</b>	The selection of a distribution site is guided by questions concerning accessibility, security and shade or shelter for recipients when queuing, and access to water. Often, sites are selected purely in relation to accessibility by truck or plane and crowd management. Site selection is seldom participatory, whereas a focus group can help you to identify the different options and to weigh up their comparative advantages and disadvantages, leading to a shared responsibility.
<b>Timing</b>	Time is usually a limited resource. People in crisis situations are generally concerned with ensuring the functioning of labour-intensive coping and survival mechanisms. The time constraint confronted by the affected population is not necessarily the same as that which aid actors face. Only a participatory process involving considerable dialogue can ensure that an appropriate compromise on the timing of the delivery is reached—one that takes into account the constraints faced by all stakeholders.
<b>Distribution modalities</b>	The humiliating act of queuing, mismanagement of lists, limited social-control mechanisms, and socially inappropriate methods of distribution will result in chaotic and bungled distributions. A proactive dialogue with organised focus groups can go a long way towards guiding the selection of appropriate distribution modalities.

People are simply called to the distribution point, sometimes with very little notice. Such approaches often generate a strong sense of defiance among members of the affected population, and can foster a desire to 'cheat the system'. Consequently, there is a need for more stringent controls. Unfortunately due to a lack of forward thinking sometimes quite distressing mechanisms have to be put in place, such as 'marking people with ink' and checking if the people queuing are female. One can well ask if the dignity of those assisted from the affected population is respected in such instances. This system is highly demanding in terms of labour and it can degenerate easily, since local authorities and structures are given little, if any, responsibility.

Yet, various agencies have tested many different mechanisms for participatory distribution. Three main approaches can be defined, depending on the level of participation envisaged, each having been proved to be cost-effective and relatively efficient.

## 3

■ **Approach 1 Practical involvement of the population** (instrumental)

Here, the population provides manpower to clean distribution sites, unload trucks and to transport food to nearby storage facilities, and it designates volunteers to participate in the distribution itself. Control has to be relatively strict. Immediate post-distribution monitoring is essential and should take place at the fence of the distribution site.

- **Approach 2 Delegation of responsibility** (collaborative)  
Local institutions or structures manage the food-distribution process. This can ease distribution logistics, facilitate access to the population, and enhance social control.

**In Rwanda**, prior to the genocide of 1994, it was common practice to organise the distribution of food through the local administration and under the authority of the district administration. The Bami (traditional chiefs) were deeply involved in the process, to ensure that the population

was kept fully informed. The local administration had been trained in distribution-site management. Also, the villagers collected the food staple at a site where it was stored according to their living area (or hill), such that they would know where to go. Intimate knowledge of their neighbours' was a strong means of social control.

However, there are also some counter-indications to problems with this approach. For instance, when the society concerned is of an oppressive nature, the control of distribution by certain stakeholders will reinforce their power. Also, the risk of diversion can be increased.

In all of the Rwandan refugee camps in **Goma (former Zaire)**, *commune* heads actively participated in food distributions, preparing lists and assisting in the distribution itself. While this enabled the distributions to start very quickly, and required fewer agency staff, it also meant that distributions in large camps were chaotic, and more open to abuse by *commune* leaders, who could influence the size of the rations received by particular groups and potentially divert a proportion of the food for their own use.

Furthermore, 'given the context that produced the refugee exodus, i.e. the call for Hutus to "leave the country and continue the struggle from across the border"; the role of the militia in instigating and spreading the genocide; and the involvement in the militia of many *commune* and *prefecture* leaders, the use of *commune* leaders to distribute food was politically charged and potentially beneficial to the militia and those who had been involved in the genocide'.<sup>10</sup>

- **Approach 3 Support for a local initiative** (supportive)  
This type of approach is very rare, because, particularly in regard to distribution, organisations want or need (due to obligations to

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<sup>10</sup> Borton, J., Brusset, E., Hallam, A. et al 'The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience', Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, Copenhagen, 1996.

donors) to keep control of the process. However, examples have been found where local structures carried out the assessment, the design, and programme implementation. They only turned to an external organisation to provide the food and the other items to be dispersed. Although the food-providing organisation can be involved in the monitoring, implementation is largely conducted by the local structure.

In the days immediately after the Bojaya massacre, in Colombia—resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people and the displacement of some 7,000 others—community organisations carried out a census of the affected population, and a detailed assessment of its needs. They compiled all of the information and turned to various aid organisations to provide the various items required. The World Food Programme supplied the requested food, but community representatives managed implementation of the distribution.

### 3

The rationale behind choosing one or other of the methods presented above should relate to your stakeholder analysis (see the paragraph 'Who is who' in chapter 3.4). Questions you can ask yourself to guide your choice of approach include the following.

- Which local stakeholders could potentially take part in implementation of the distribution or could execute the process themselves?
- What is their capacity?
- What are their agendas?
- How does the population perceive them?

Sometimes, you might find yourself perplexed when the only solution is to go back to the situation analysis and to examine the potential of other distribution modalities.

- ▶ Below are some tips on how a distribution can be managed in a participatory manner.

- If you cannot delegate the distribution to a local actor, you can invite representatives of the population to oversee the distribution with you, which enhances your level of accountability to the population, supports information sharing, and can increase trust between you and the population.
- If you are delegating some tasks or supporting a local structure, you can create a committee composed of the various stakeholders participating in the implementation to manage, organise and oversee the distribution jointly.

You should be prepared to train the people you are working with in the various procedures involved in the distribution.

 And remember, the very least you must do is inform the affected population as widely as possible about how the distribution will occur and the rationale behind the procedures! Failure to do so can create tension within the population and between you and the stakeholders involved.

#### 8.2.4 MONITORING

Food-aid programmes are often difficult due to the inherent risk of diversion, inappropriate distribution, and misallocation of rations, for example. Monitoring before and after the distribution is, therefore, essential to maintain trust between the affected population and the aid organisation, and to avoid or manage tensions within the population.

Pre- and post-distribution monitoring can be done:

- by your agency (although not very participatory, accountability to donors often requires it);
- by your agency in collaboration with local actors and population representatives; or

- by the population itself, through social-control mechanisms. This implies that a high level of transparency has been achieved (see chapters 2 and 6).

Monitoring in a participatory manner can enhance the efficiency of the process and the level of reliability, strengthen local capacity, and support and maintain the trust that exists between your organisation and the affected population.

One way of managing a participatory monitoring process is to form a monitoring committee composed of representatives of the various stakeholders involved (including your organisation).

**In Colombia**, World Food Programme *observation committees*, comprising members of the population, monitor the food-distribution process, the list of those to be assisted from the affected population, product quality and the quantities dispersed, the level of equity in relation to the distribution process, product arrival dates, storage in centres, and the time and date of the distribution. This allows the WFP to reduce its inspection efforts and to strengthen its bonds with the community. Observation committee members call or correspond with the WFP frequently.

### 3

- ▲ Be careful to ensure that the monitoring process does not exclude 'voiceless' groups, but that giving them an opportunity to speak out and eventually complain does not put them at risk.

#### **A Participatory pre-distribution monitoring**

Pre-distribution monitoring consists of checking that those to be assisted on distribution lists correspond to the targeting criteria. This should be done whenever possible, since it is far easier to deal with errors and complaints before the distribution than during or after it!

Ways of verifying lists in a participatory way include the following.

- A team designated by the affected population carries out house-to-house verification.

- Display posters, publish lists, and make announcements at public meetings on the targeting criteria and the lists, so that people who meet the criteria but are not on the list can understand why they were not included. Develop a mechanism to collect queries/claims; it should be in place a few days/weeks before the distribution takes place.

 Be ready to manage claims and complaints, and allow time to do this before the distribution. As an external stakeholder, you may be in a position to act as a mediator if there are tensions between local stakeholders.

### **B Distribution and post-distribution monitoring**

Distribution and post-distribution monitoring is important to maintaining trust between the affected population and the organisation. Errors, misallocations and diversions, for instance, can result in tension and loss of trust, both within the population and between the population and the aid organisation.

Distribution and post-distribution exercises are very important to verify:

- the timeliness of the process;
- the quality of the information disseminated prior to the distribution;
- whether the process is fair;
- the presence or absence of distortion and unplanned food allocations (such as to the military and political actors); and
- whether there is a need for adjustments and the possible options for making such changes.

Different tools are available for this undertaking.

- A straightforward survey conducted at the gate of the distribution point (questions, checking bags, weighing goods) by

designated representatives of the population and members of the agency.

- Simple focus groups to gain feedback swiftly (here again, proportional piling and ranking exercises are very useful).
- House-to-house random surveys carried out by the same teams.
- More refined systems based on questionnaires.

Triangulating the information collected through various means is important to checking the reliability of the data.

 Be careful to ensure that the population representatives involved in the monitoring are in a position to be fair and impartial. Remember that members of the affected population with some control over distributed goods can be put under considerable pressure; as an external stakeholder, be ready to support them.

The results of the post-monitoring exercises should be fed back to the main stakeholders, particularly those who have participated in the process, to stimulate ideas and to find solutions. As a mark of accountability, results should also be shared with the population at large, to ensure that it sees the efforts being made to achieve a fair and appropriate process of food distribution.

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### 8.2.5 EVALUATION

A participatory evaluation should consider both the impact of the distribution and of the process.

An evaluation of the **impact of food-aid programmes** aims to assess:

- the impact of the food ration on anthropometric indicators (such as malnutrition rates);
- the impact of the food ration on the diet; and
- the impact of the food ration on destitution processes.

It serves also to assess, *inter alia*, the possible negative effects on:

- the prices of local goods and foodstuffs;
- local activity calendars;
- population movement; and
- the conflict dynamics in the area (if this is a conflict situation).

In particular, it is important to evaluate the **impact on local markets**, which can be drastically influenced by the import and free distribution of large quantities of foodstuffs.

An evaluation of the **process** should cover issues like:

- appropriateness of the targeting criteria;
- coherence between the targeting criteria and actual aid recipients;
- content of the ration (type and quantity of items);
- information dissemination processes;
- management of claims and complaints; and
- level of participation in the various stages of the distribution.

Participatory evaluation of food-aid programmes can be done via an instrumental, collaborative or supportive approach (see chapter 7). Your choice will depend on the objective of the evaluation. If you plan to implement further programmes after the food distribution, it is particularly important to be participatory, as the evaluation can serve as a basis for future collaboration.

-  Before choosing your approach, remember that food aid is an expensive commodity in an environment with few resources. Questions raised in relation to the management of distribution (such as equity, list distortion) or the effects, can quickly lead the evaluation team to address issues at stake. Before delegating to local actors, ensure that this exercise will not put them in danger.

- ▶ Various exercises and tools that can be useful in a participatory evaluation.
- **Sharing of Stories** for instance, 'how did the food distributed change my life that week?' and 'why I was not happy with the distribution process'.
  - **Forming focus groups on impact** such as proportional piling on the way that family resources were used before and after the distribution; and work with timelines and activity calendars to measure timeliness.
  - **Focus groups on the process** including ranking exercises on the appropriateness of the items contained in the ration, and the collection of ideas on how information was disseminated.

If a nutritional survey is planned to measure the impact on nutritional status, teams of women from the population can be mobilised to carry out a house-to-house information campaign, and, eventually, to identify and organise means for mothers to be involved in anthropometric measurements.

## 8.3 PARTICIPATION IN NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

Nutrition is at the heart of a family's life and culture. What foods are eaten, how they are prepared, and how they are shared between household members and neighbours, are part of a society's cultural heritage. Meanwhile, infant- and child-feeding practices are an intrinsic part of the mother-child bond. Dealing with nutritional issues, therefore, demands sensitivity and care, as well as trust and respect between families (particularly mothers) and aid workers.

Some nutritional techniques commonly used by humanitarian actors may, however, work against the building of trust. Anthropometric assessments, for example, are often rushed, whether held in large settings or in the home. They can be seen as an intrusion, especially when household members are not informed of the meaning and the purpose of the exercise. The targeting of feeding is carried out using quantitative indicators, such as the weight-to-height ratio, which may have little significance for mothers, and which may impose a level of discrimination between children that might be culturally inappropriate. Nutritional education sessions often involve large groups, with little interaction between mothers.

A few simple principles, ideas and examples are set out below to help you approach nutrition in a participatory manner.

### 8.3.1 PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

#### **A Who to work with**

Understanding the nutritional circumstances of crisis-affected households also means having knowledge of their **food security and health** situation (see chapters 8.1 and 11). This section will focus on nutrition as a feeding practice, household distribution of food and nutritional status, as measured by anthropometric indicators.

- ▶ The first stage of the participatory assessment is to **pinpoint the individuals or groups** that play a key role in feeding practices and nutrition, to **recognise their capacities**, and to **identify existing local initiatives** (such as community kitchens run by women's groups and nutritional education classes in schools). These individuals or groups can be mothers, mothers-in-law, women's groups, young girls, clinic staff or community health workers, heads of households, traditional healers, and even religious leaders, *inter alia*. They will be the main people to consult and work with in order to mobilise other community members throughout the project cycle. It is important to involve them from the outset.

Do not forget to be **sensitive in choosing agency staff** (international and national). They should be able to establish a relationship built on confidence with key community members. Since child and family nutrition is often in the hands of women, it may be more appropriate, in many instances, to work with female personnel, if possible, who have experience of childcare and are familiar with local food preparation and feeding practices.

### 3

#### **B Foods and feeding practices**

Among the main nutrition issues to address during a participatory assessment are:

- the types of food available and the foods used (including seasonal variations);
- beliefs concerning food and food preparation (such as hot/cold classification, therapeutic foods, famine foods, and views on breastfeeding), and motivations regarding certain feeding practices (religion and family dynamics, for instance);
- food-preparation methods;
- intra-household food distribution;
- infant feeding and weaning practices, and beliefs/attitudes related to them;

- constraints on feeding practices (food availability and birth spacing, for example); and
- changes in the above due to the crisis (if applicable).

The main way of gathering this information is through **focus groups**. When more private or intimate topics are addressed (like breastfeeding and infant feeding), it might be necessary to allow time for discussion to allow for confidence to be built.

**Direct observation** can serve to support discussions on the foods that are used and food-preparation techniques. This can be done through **market visits and home visits**, for example.



**Market visits** with informants can generate considerable information on food availability and can be a good way of engaging in lively and rich discussions. As you walk, an initially small group can develop into a large focus group, yielding a diverse range of information and ideas.

**Home visits** and observation of food preparation and mealtimes can serve to confirm information collected in discussions. They can also be a way of initiating a relationship between field workers and households.



**Proportional piling** can be used to identify the nutritional value of food in the diet, and to address other quantifiable issues; this is also a good way of triggering discussion. Different exercises can be conducted with different socio-economic or ethnic groups to compare diets and, after a crisis, to measure its impact on the diet.

Tables similar to the ones that follow can be used to organise collected information. Each of the columns corresponds to a topic for discussion with key informants and/or focus groups.

**Table 20** Family feeding practices before and after a crisis

	Foods available in household (purchased and produced)	Foods eaten (frequency)	Storage, preparation and hygiene	Eating order	Who is responsible for purchasing, storing and preparing food?
Before crisis					
After crisis					

This can also be done by season, or other factors that affect feeding practices.

**Table 21** Infant feeding practices

Age of children under 2 years	Breast feeding period	Weaning foods and age introduced	Preparation of weaning foods	Factors/beliefs affecting infant feeding	Care/feeding during illness	Remarks on mother-child relationship
Child 1						
Child 2						

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Another useful exercise is to elaborate **daily schedules** of the main people involved in food collection and preparation, and child feeding (see chapter 3, section 3.2.4), as this helps in identifying constraints and opportunities, which can be acted on to improve the household's nutritional situation.

An effective way of collecting important information on feeding practices is to identify those who have more appropriate feeding practices and the factors that affect these practices in a beneficial way. These mothers can also play a key role in project design and implementation e.g. as counselling mothers (mothers promote and communicate with affected populations by giving information and training).

### C Anthropometric assessments

**Anthropometric assessments** (surveys carried out to obtain malnutrition rates, based on measurements of weight, height and the circumference of the mid upper arm) are typically highly 'non-participatory', with the affected population's involvement often limited to being weighed and measured. The meaning of these measurements and the purpose of the exercise can easily remain obscure to members of the population. Even if there is no participation, the involvement of the affected population is needed, at the very least:

- to ensure attendance—in the case of nutritional screenings (where mothers and children must come to the screening point and accept that they or their children are to be measured); and
- to ensure that survey teams are welcome in homes—in the case of home surveys.

*When carrying out its fieldwork in Eastern DRC, the Global Study team faced resistance and defiance within certain Pygmy communities. It turned out that these communities had been surveyed in an anthropometric assessment months before, but they had not received any word from the organisation subsequently. Some population members complained that: 'This organisation has dared to come weigh and measure us, and they never gave us any food, and we have never seen them again'. Their trust in humanitarian organisations as a whole had thus been undermined.*

The way the assessment is done, especially with regard to appraisals carried out before programmes are launched, can determine the type of relationship that is established between the population and the agency (trust/collaboration versus suspicion/disinterest). It is crucial, therefore, to explain the process and its objectives (see chapter 2). This can be done through, for example:

- meetings with local authorities, elders and key informants. (While this step is essential, and should occur first, it is generally

- not sufficient to ensure that all those with an interest in the assessment are informed); and
- meetings in public spaces (such as the market, church, mosque or water point).

When it is difficult for mothers to leave their homes (as in Muslim countries, for instance), arrangements can be made to visit houses in areas where the survey will take place.

Even if it is only possible to carry out a quick quantitative exercise, a nutritional survey also provides an opportunity to visit and talk with household members; when planning the assessment you should allow enough time to take advantage of this.

The interpretation of survey results can also be a topic for discussion in focus groups, at least between the teams and the people that have participated directly in it. Malnutrition rates can be used to provoke discussion ('why is this age group apparently more vulnerable to malnutrition than other age groups', for instance). It may bring to light certain elements that expatriate staff can overlook.

### 3

#### **Nutritional surveys in Afghanistan under the Taliban**

Carrying out household anthropometrical surveys in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime was difficult. Teams of Afghan and expatriate women, eager to finish a tiring exercise and tense because of restrictions imposed by the regime on the movement of women, rushed from house to house. They quickly undressed and measured (often crying) children and filled in structured questionnaires with little explanation or input from mothers. On some occasions, mothers refused to have their children measured.

These surveys could have been a unique opportunity to gain more qualitative observations and to engage in a dialogue with mothers at a time when accessing women was particularly difficult. This would have meant organising the survey differently and training the teams in matters besides anthropometrics.

### 8.3.2 DESIGN

Among the individuals/groups that you meet during the assessment phase, it might be helpful to identify those that are most likely to be actively involved in the later stages of the project, and/or to act as an intermediary between the population and the agency.

The methods used are common group planning techniques, including brainstorming in focus groups and collective elaboration of problem and solution trees.

Potential nutrition programmes are varied; for each, key questions should be raised collectively.

**Nutrition education** what type of messages should be transmitted? Who should disseminate them? And how (theatre, puppet shows, posters, for instance)?

**Vegetable/Kitchen gardens**<sup>11</sup> what should/can be cultivated? Where? By whom?

**Selective feeding programmes** (Supplementary Feeding Centre (SFC) or Therapeutic Feeding Centre (TFC)) although these programmes are usually based on the implementation of a set protocol, and are constrained by logistical issues and donor guidelines, it is also possible to involve actively those that are assisted or household members in their design, such as in relation to location (distance from various neighbourhoods or villages, for example), the type of centre ('wet' ration as opposed to 'dry' ration<sup>12</sup> in SFCs; day-care TFC or 24-hour

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<sup>11</sup> A Vegetable/Kitchen garden is a small-scale garden where families produce a range of food, allowing for 'a little bit of everything' all year round rather than the reliance on a single harvest of one or two crops, primarily corn and beans).

<sup>12</sup> A 'wet' ration is a prepared meal that is eaten in a centre; a 'dry' ration is uncooked (often a porridge mixture) and is to be prepared and consumed at home.

TFC), and the content of the ration. Suggestions from the affected population can help to enhance the adaptation of the programme to local conditions and to take into account **security** and **access** issues.

When it is expected that members of the affected population will be involved in programme implementation (see the following section), it is important to consult them on the tasks that people can and/or are interested in performing.

Furthermore, the resources available for a feeding programme can be used to support or strengthen an existing local initiative (like a community kitchen or an orphan feeding project). The challenge is to collectively identify how your organisation's resources (food, logistics and expertise) can be used to support this.

### Using consultative research for nutrition programming: Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs)<sup>13</sup>

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TIPs (also known as household trials) involve a series of visits to selected homes to test new behaviours aimed at improving child nutrition. This is done by discussing potential improved practices, negotiating specific changes, and following up to record the reactions of mothers and children to the new practices. Analysis of the results of TIPs includes summaries of common feeding problems, identification of the most acceptable recommendations, ways that mothers modify these recommendations, and motivations and constraints related to trying out these new behaviours. All of this information can be used to develop nutrition messages and your programme's communication strategy.

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<sup>13</sup> Dickin, K., Griffiths, M. and Piwoz, E., Designing by Dialogue. Consultative Research for Improving Young Child Feeding. Prepared by The Manoff Group for SARA Project (USAID), Academy for Educational Development: Washington, D.C., 1997.

### 8.3.3 IMPLEMENTATION

There are a variety of ways to engage with mothers, others of those that are assisted and other interested individuals in regard to implementation of nutrition projects. These range from involvement in simple tasks (such as participation in the preparation of family meals in therapeutic feeding centres) to full delegation of activities, or providing support for existing nutrition programmes. At a minimum, the programmes should be organised in a way that facilitates exchanges and encourages respect between agency staff and the affected population (for instance, the arrangement of distribution, smaller groups in education sessions, and a staff schedule allowing for personal attention to the needs of the local population).

Several examples of programmes are presented below.

#### **Community development programme with comprehensive nutrition component in Congo-Brazzaville<sup>14</sup>**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNICEF launched this initiative following the 1997–99 armed conflict, which had a severe psychological and physical impact on the population. The nutritional component included child health and growth promotion, micronutrient supplementation, de-worming, rehabilitation of malnourished children, and the management of child illness. The programme was implemented through elected Local Development Committees (LDCs) and Community Outreach Workers (COWs). They were trained in trauma counselling, basic health and nutrition, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and in identifying solutions. Also, mothers with positive-deviance behaviours were used as models in developing nutritious recipes using locally available foods and drawing on health education messages. After a year, an evaluation showed that mothers' knowledge of nutrition and health had improved. Practices had also improved, although not as much as expected.

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<sup>14</sup>Tchibindat F, Mouyokani, I. and Ba, M., Community empowerment after armed conflict: a case study from Congo-Brazzaville, (UNICEF)

During focus groups, mothers explained that they lacked the money to buy nutritious foods and requested that income-generating activities be initiated to fill the gap. In some areas, COWs launched a community-savings initiative to aid poorer households. Malnutrition rates fell, in line with the general trend across the country, although the improvement was greatest in intervention sectors. Community assessments identified other needs (such as water, road rehabilitation, education, and mosquito control) that were beyond UNICEF's mandate and capacity, but that could be addressed by other bodies serving as part of a multi-agency taskforce.

### Home treatment of severe acute malnutrition in Sierra Leone

The standard treatment of severe malnutrition in TFCs—where patients stay for one to two months with their carer (usually the mother)—entails considerable opportunity costs for families. The longer a carer spends in the centre, the less time he/she has to tend to other children and to participate in the economic activities of the household. This is one reason why several agencies are investigating the possibility of treating severe malnutrition at home.

Action Contre la Faim began with a clinical trial to evaluate the new approach in Sierra Leone. After spending the initial treatment phase in the centre, patients who satisfy certain health and nutrition criteria are sent home. The mother is then responsible for feeding the child with therapeutic foods that she has been trained to prepare and use in the centre. Patients have weekly nutritional and medical check-ups.

The results of the trial in Sierra Leone were extremely positive, not only at a technical level (weight gains and recovery rates experienced by patients were equivalent to those witnessed in the TFCs), but also in terms of the sense of satisfaction and self-fulfilment enjoyed by mothers. The latter could reintegrate into the household sooner and felt a tremendous sense of pride at their ability to cure their child by themselves. It helped to reduce feelings of fatalism with regard to child illness and increased the motivation of mothers to provide their children with better nutrition and healthcare.

The agency showed that health education and community involvement were as important to the success of the new strategy as the nutritional products used and the initial medical treatment offered to the children.

#### 8.3.4 MONITORING

Nutrition programmes are often monitored using quantitative indicators, such as weight gain, malnutrition rates, admission/discharge levels, and the number of education sessions. Although these are important in relation to monitoring the technical effectiveness of the programmes, they often omit the perspectives of those that are being assisted. However, poor quantitative results may not be due to inadequate technical implementation, but to a lack of relevance and compatibility in terms of programmes that meet the local population's concerns or habits. Quantitative monitoring should thus be complemented with qualitative information regarding the satisfaction, complaints and suggestions, *inter alia*, of those that are assisted and other members of the affected population. This can be done through focus groups, informal interviews and visits.

#### 8.3.5 EVALUATION

The evaluation should cover issues concerning impact and process.

Nutrition programmes aim to reduce malnutrition (chronic or acute) by preventing or treating it. Consequently, impact should ideally be measured in terms of a fall in the rates of malnutrition (although it is often difficult to attribute any change to an intervention, given the large number of factors that affect malnutrition).

Furthermore, for some types of programmes, particularly nutritional education programmes, it is difficult to measure impact in terms of malnutrition. Qualitative changes, such as behavioural change and increased knowledge, are the main quantifiable impact (how they are measured needs to be established during the design phase).

Focus groups with people from the affected population, which analyse how the programme has affected them, are a good way of collecting qualitative information on the effect of the programme. The impact in terms of local population satisfaction/dissatisfaction should not be omitted.

The level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the affected population and its recommendations regarding the programme process (information sharing, participation, and implementation of people's suggestions, for example) are also vital, since feedback is key to evaluating the process and to improving future interventions.

#### **Reminder**

Here again, the importance of explaining (through proper feedback) what will be done with the information that has been collected during the monitoring and evaluation sessions must be reiterated, especially when the methods used to collect the data (like anthropometric measurements) may seem alien to the affected population.

## 3

### 8.4 PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION

Farmers have been cultivating their land for centuries. They know their area, soil quality, water availability and cultivation techniques. They have seen agricultural programmes that have worked, and those that have not. Their experience, and, therefore, their participation, is crucial to the success of agricultural rehabilitation programmes. Furthermore, the objective of such programmes is to lay the foundations for agricultural recovery in the long-term. As such, programme ownership by the affected population is essential.

The influence of Participatory Rural Appraisal is probably strongest in this sector, since PRA techniques emerged mainly out of rural development debates. But experience shows that participatory

approaches are also very useful and rewarding in regard to emergency or post-crisis agricultural rehabilitation, where they can be employed throughout the project cycle.

#### 8.4.1 ASSESSMENT

Key elements concerning approaches to participatory assessments have already been outlined in chapter 3. A few methodological issues can, however, be added to this list of factors, specifically in relation to agricultural rehabilitation, so as to fine-tune your approach to participatory assessment.

- Traditional names should be used when talking about agro-ecological and bio-climatic conditions.
- Agro-ecological and bio-climatic conditions should be linked to agro-pastoral calendars.
- Agricultural practices by gender and age-group should be clarified, as well as cropping patterns, in order to ascertain peaks of labour.
- Land tenure and social mechanisms related to access to land, water and money should be analysed collectively.
- Traditional seed systems should be identified collectively and their strengths and weaknesses clearly established.
- Local understanding of hazards and risks and existing adaptive mechanisms should be identified and understood.
- Possible interaction with other programmes, such as food distribution, must be considered and appraised.

It is particularly important to disaggregate information by gender, as the distribution of agricultural tasks and responsibilities between men and women can be a very important factor. Your organisation of focus groups should be highly sensitive to gender.

### Gender specific activity calendar

The division of labour in the field, as well as the control of resources, is, in most cases, very different between women and men, but it is subject to many variations depending on the society (matrilineal or patrilineal, and Muslim or Buddhist, for instance). Establishing a **gender-specific activity calendar** is, therefore, very important.

		Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Activities</b>														
Crop 1	Men													
	Women													
Crop 2	Men													
	Women													
Livestock	Men													
	Women													
Market	Men													
	Women													
Wood collection	Men													
	Women													

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-  To complement this calendar, a **focus group** to determine (for each crop) who manages the seeds, the harvest, the stocks and the money can be extremely useful.

**Proportional piling** and **ranking exercises** are, again, very powerful tools in both qualitative and quantitative analysis of needs in poor, neglected crisis-affected farming communities.

 **Proportional piling** can help in quantifying the losses resulting from the disaster, area by area, and item by item.

**Participatory ranking** is a very powerful tool in identifying priorities and establishing a hierarchy of the various factors affecting production.

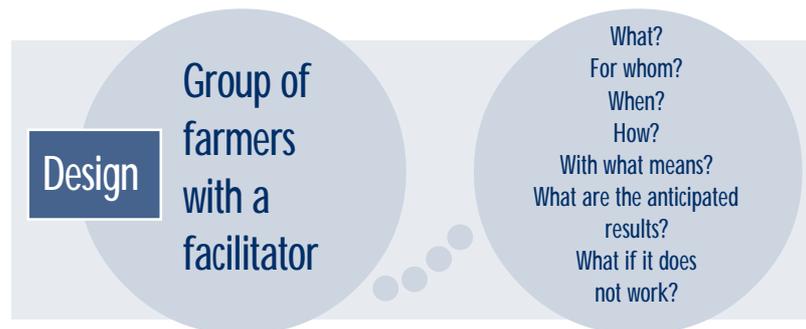
## 8.4.2 DESIGN

### A Technical design

Farmers are usually not passive aid recipients; first and foremost, they are active stakeholders. To include a group of farmers in the process of defining an intervention is, in most instances, a useful exercise.

Another important element is to ensure that the suggested **programme is compatible with farmers' strategies and knowledge**. As there are also risks of error and scope for interpretation, involving farmers in the technical design of the programme is a wise way of **sharing responsibility**.

Several issues are at stake and should be clarified through focus groups.



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A major benefit of participatory design is that it ensures that existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences can be taken into account.

- It also ensures that the operational choice makes sense. There are usually several options to choose from: distribution of seeds; multiplication of seeds; distribution of tools; support for blacksmiths making the tools; veterinary care; restocking; irrigation; development of watering points. What kind of participatory process can be employed to choose between the available options?

Once a strategy is chosen, a more detailed participatory design process can begin.

 **Figure 26** The design of the content of a seed distribution programme

The first part of the participatory process is to fill in the first column. This is done after an initial group exercise involving transect walks, mapping and group discussion. The second column should be completed during a plenary session, following a presentation of the drawn up transect walk, the mapping, and an agricultural calendar.

Diversity of the agricultural landscape	Diversity of the seed packets to be distributed
<b>Zone A</b> Higher land with major slopes, resulting in quick drainage. Cold is a constraint that shortens the growing season	The seed package should include drought- and cold-resistant crops. It should be distributed in a timely fashion, since room for manoeuvre is limited
<b>Zone B</b> Lower lands with swamps and irrigation potential. Soils are very heavy	The seed package should include flood-resistant crops and those suited to irrigation
<b>Zone C</b> Intermediary hills, with rocky terrain and sandy soils. Good drainage, but very hot conditions	The seed package should include drought-resistant crops, capable of tolerating relatively unfertile soil

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- ▶ A very useful exercise at this stage is to **prepare a logical framework** for your proposed activity with the affected population or group of farmers that you are engaged with. Highly **informative local indicators** can be identified when elaborating a logical framework in a participatory way.

### **B Targeting**

A particular element of the participatory targeting process, in the context of agricultural rehabilitation programmes, is that it should help to identify people who are skilled in using the means of production (like seeds and tools).

- Does that mean that only people with guaranteed access to land can be targeted?
- What should be done to assist the others?
- Could granting landless people access to the means of production become a useful way for them to negotiate access to land?
- Are we generating additional jealousy and a new source of inequity?



#### Focus group on who should receive assistance

Very poor farmers? But they are often landless and do not have access to other means of production, such as draught animals and ploughshares.

Middle class farmers? In most instances, they will produce only to meet their needs.

Rich farmers? They will most likely produce a surplus, which they will sell and become richer.

If we give to the last group, what will be the benefit to other groups?

3

In order to respond correctly to these questions, the targeting exercise should be collective, transparent and participatory. Once a strategy has been identified, discussed and agreed with the group that you are engaged with, it should be shared with other stakeholders in order to ascertain their views and, eventually, to garner their support. In addition, a proper information campaign should be launched.

Several points should be taken into account in the targeting exercise, including land and access to resources.



#### Brainstorming on land availability

Issues related to land availability, land rights, and the possibility and means of accessing land are often very important, but extremely sensitive.

Controlling access to land is a source of power, but also a matter loaded with cultural symbols, which should be approached with care. A series of steps, ranging from interviews with key informants to focus groups on land rights, can be useful in gathering information and maintaining transparency.

'I need to understand and we need to map out this issue in order to identify collectively the problems associated with, and the solutions to, the following question: whom shall we distribute the means of production to?' This is how the issue could be presented at the start of the session.

When targeting criteria have been agreed, local actors (including local authorities, local NGOs and local farmer organisations) can be entrusted with the actual process of **establishing lists**. Various control **mechanisms** will need either to be activated or supported. This can be done:

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- by the agency (although not very participatory, accountability to donors sometimes necessitates it);
- by the agency in collaboration with local actors and representatives of the population; or
- by the population, utilising social-control mechanisms. This implies that a high level of transparency has been achieved (see chapter 2).

#### 8.4.3 IMPLEMENTATION

When the assistance programme is based on the distribution of agricultural inputs, the existing participation mechanisms (mentioned in chapter 4) can be applied.

The participatory process becomes more complicated when the programmes go beyond input distribution. Many participatory tools employed in the development sphere can be applied in such cases. Yet, due to the constraints related to crisis environments (concerning access

and security, for instance), these development-oriented participatory methods often need to be adapted and contextualised.

#### **Veterinary programme (Somalia, 1993)**

This programme was set up to stimulate the livestock sector in a pastoral economy affected by a deadly inter- and intra-clan conflict. As livestock is a central element of Somali culture, it was very easy to gain people's support, to engage them without great difficulty in cost-recovery schemes, and to set up a process via which community representatives could be designated for training as para-veterinarians.

#### **Seed multiplication programme (Rwanda 1995)**

In Rwanda, immediately following the conflict, it was very difficult to find quality seeds. It thus became essential to stimulate the existing traditional seed sector and to re-initiate production of quality seeds for certain crops. In this case, cooperatives and farmers' associations were the main partners—they had played a very important role before the genocide. Where their leaders were still alive and had not been involved in the massacre, these local entities played an extremely important part in the implementation of the seed programme.

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### **8.4.4 MONITORING**

#### **A Pre-distribution monitoring**

Pre-distribution monitoring might be necessary to crosscheck the list of those assisted from the affected population. Here, again, it can be done by the agency alone or it can be carried out in a participatory manner. The key issue is how to deal with possible claims. The participatory nature of the process normally ensures that the community can take responsibility for, and play its part in, solving problems that arise from targeting and responding to complaints related to the list.

▶ In certain areas, it is possible to visit people from the affected population's fields with a team of designated local people and representatives of the village elders, prior to the distribution of agricultural inputs. This is useful for:

- settling disagreements;
- clarifying the rationale behind the targeting; and
- preparing the ground for an impact evaluation at harvest time.

### **B Post-distribution monitoring**

Although post-distribution monitoring is of great importance in programmes that involve the large-scale distribution of agricultural inputs, it can also have relevance to other, less conventional, activities. It should help to identify gaps and problems, as well as the counter-measures that might be required.

Particularly important is the collection of information on:

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- the timeliness of the process;
- the quality of the information disseminated prior to the distribution;
- the fairness of the process;
- the presence or absence of distortion and unplanned allocation of production means; and
- initial indicators highlighting members of the affected population's satisfaction.

As it is often the first place where lessons are learned, it is vital to ensure that this collective exercise can also lead to participatory decisions on possible or necessary programme amendments.

🔗 Different tools are available to the aid community at this juncture:

- a simple survey at the 'gate' of the distribution point;

- simple focus group to provide quick feedback (here, proportional-piling and ranking exercises are very useful); and
- more refined systems based on questionnaires.

In a participatory post-monitoring process, results should be fed back to the main stakeholders, particularly those involved in the monitoring, to help ensure the responsibility of all, to stimulate the production of ideas and to find solutions. They should also, as a mark of accountability, be shared with the wider population, so that it sees that efforts are being made to improve the system, to listen to possible complaints and to ensure transparency in the process.

In a seed-distribution programme, two different seed-type kits were mistakenly inverted: the seed kit for the low land was packed in plastic bags marked high land. The participatory post-distribution survey immediately identified the problem and an emergency process was organised to collect the wrong seeds and to dispatch the right ones, before people started planting them. People were happy to see how cautious the agency was, and a lot of farmers got involved in the recollection process without any financial incentive. Had this error not been identified quickly through post-distribution monitoring, its impact would have been dramatic.

#### 8.4.5 EVALUATION

Evaluation of the impact of agro-rehabilitation programmes should, in theory, reveal their affect on the diet and the family economy, as well as on destitution or recapitalisation processes.

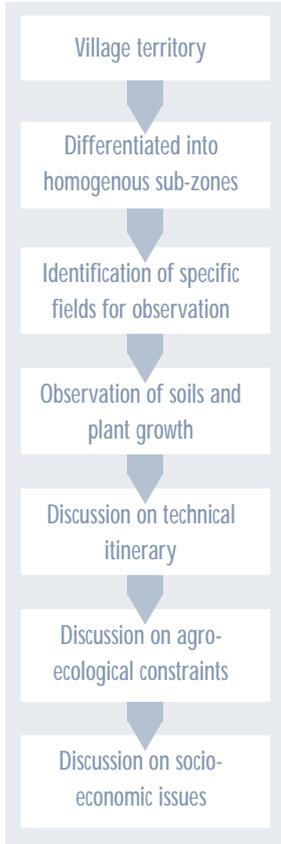
Field visits to cultivated plots, irrigation schemes, blacksmiths' workshops, and to corrals where herds are kept, for example, are the first, yet essential, part of a participatory evaluation process. The field is where one can directly observe the impact, measured with indicators defined earlier in the process. It is important to delineate at the field level the references (such as the size of the straw, the number of grains

and the colour of the fruit) that will be used to observe a given phenomenon.

- One of the most useful participatory exercises is that which leads, through several focus groups, to the elaboration of a **matrix of positive and negative effects**.

**Table 22** Evaluating positive and negative effects of agricultural rehabilitation programmes

Distribution of agricultural inputs	Seed multiplication schemes	Veterinary programmes	Tool production
<b>Positive impacts</b>			
Impact on the area cultivated	Impact on the area cultivated	Impact on animal health	Impact on the availability of tools
Impact on the yield harvested	Impact on the yield harvested	Impact on the herd size	Impact on the economy of craftsmen
Contribution of the food produced to the diet and family budget	Contribution of the seed produced to local seed security	Impact on the cereal–livestock price ratio	
<b>Negative impacts</b>			
Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs
Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars
Population movements	Population movements	Population movements	Population movements
Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area



The field visit should adopt 'zoom in/zoom out' logic, to analyse the impact of the action at various levels.

There are many ways to evaluate impact:

- field surveys with groups of farmers (left);
- market surveys with groups of women;
- granary surveys with village representatives.

The objective is to reach a shared understanding of the programme's impact on the quantity of produce in the market and on related prices.

- Who are the main actors in the market and how does it function?
- What basic food staples are available in the market at the time of the survey?
- What are the seasonal variations in crops, quantities and prices?
- What other essential goods are available?
- What is the impact of the aid programme on the availability of different items in local markets?
- What is the impact of the aid programmes on prices and accessibility?

The objective is to achieve a shared understanding of the impact of the programme on food stocks and seed reserves.

- What are the normal storing mechanisms (family-, community- or individual-based)?
- What are the normal storage techniques (house, granary or warehouse, in bulk, in bags)?
- Who is in charge of the granary system (men, women, elderly people, the village council)?
- Are there known post-harvest factors (what are they, how detrimental are they)?
- Are there known post-harvest loss-reduction systems (how do they work, who is in charge, at what cost)?
- Is there interest in working in this sector (with whom, under what conditions)?



## CHAPTER 9

# PARTICIPATION AND WATER/SANITATION PROGRAMMES

Water is **vital to survival**; it is central to all types of livelihoods. At the same time, it is a **collective asset** that, in most instances, needs to be managed at the community level. As such, it is a key factor in social and economic relationships within populations. Although its importance is universal, local perspectives on water, in regard to its value and management, are highly dependent on the context and the culture.

A population's relationship with water manifests at several levels.

- Water rights, or social and legal rules and obligations relating to the use of water, are often key aspects of local customs and regulation mechanisms.
- Water is often a principal element in conflicts and is even the source of conflict in water-scarce environments.
- Knowledge and skills, concerning water and sanitation, are usually well developed, with specific groups or individuals having recognised roles in water management.
- Practices relating to the use of water and sanitation are part of a local culture, sometimes enshrined in religious events and rituals.

Understanding these dynamics is essential, not only to ensure programme relevance and efficiency, but also to avoid creating conflict, exacerbating tensions, excluding specific groups, or putting them at risk.

It is for all of these reasons that it is particularly important to work with the affected population in all stages of a water and sanitation programme.

## 9.1 ASSESSMENT

A participatory assessment for a water and sanitation programme consists of three steps.

- Describing the water situation.
- Identifying existing knowledge and know-how.
- Defining needs.

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<p><b>The water situation</b> Including geographic, seasonal, economic and socio-cultural features, and habits related to water.</p>	<p><b>Local know-how</b> Knowledge of sourcing water; knowledge of infrastructure construction (like wells, canals and reservoirs); knowledge of the management of water and the disposal of excreta etc</p>	<p><b>Needs</b> How many people? How much water is needed? Should the quality of the water be improved? Should hygiene practices be improved?</p>
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### 9.1.1 DESCRIBING THE SITUATION

#### A **What you need to know**

Key questions that should be addressed in the assessment phase of a water and sanitation programme include all of the links in the following chain:

**Water resources?**

Rivers, springs, wells, canals, rain.

**Water quality?**

Bacterial content, etc

**Access to water?**

Socio-economic, geography, water rights

**Transport?**

Distance? Who transports? How?

**Storage?**

Where? How?

**Use?**

Irrigated agriculture, livestock, cooking, washing

**Sanitation and hygiene?**

Frequency of washing, disposal of excreta, etc

These questions can be addressed through various **focus groups**. In most situations, it will be important to ensure that their composition is diverse, to take account of the perspectives of different stakeholders and groups. One may organise separate focus groups, too, particularly for women who may have specific responsibilities in regard to water management. Also, consulting children can generate essential insights on the role that they play, such as collecting water, and can highlight specific needs and suggestions that they may have.

During children's focus groups in Afghanistan, children explained that fetching water was the task that they found most burdensome.

In relation to hygiene and sanitation (such as washing and the disposal of excreta), cultural sensitivity runs high, and you might find it difficult to deal with these issues in large groups. Smaller focus groups, if possible, involving respected key informants (such as the local doctor, the village clerk, or the Mullah in a Muslim context), might be more appropriate. A

special session might have to take place with women only, handled with a particularly high degree of sensitivity and, if possible, managed by female staff.

In order to understand the issues listed above, it is important to be aware of the various factors that affect them.

- The environment and the geology of the area.
- The socio-economic context and the livelihoods of the population.

### **B The environment and geology**

The **climate** will, of course, be a key determinant in relation to access to water. It is important, therefore, to establish patterns of water availability, particularly seasonal variations.

-  This can be done by collectively elaborating a **seasonal calendar**, including the rainy season, times when the snow thaws, and periods of flooding or drought. Other water-related issues can also be added, such as periods with there is a high prevalence of water-borne **diseases** (like diarrhoea and dengue) and vectors (such as mosquitoes and guinea worm).

The **geography** and **relief** of the area is another essential factor, as it can determine the potential for digging irrigation networks, the presence of springs or rivers, and the amount of water generated by mountain snow thaws, for example. The geology (ground composition) will also determine the presence of underground water tables, or the possibility to dig boreholes and/or wells.

-  **Mapping exercises** are very useful to describe the location of various water sources, while **transect** walks can be used to describe the geology of an area and the presence of underground water sources.

The information collected can be summarised in a table (see below). Such a table can be validated in small **focus groups** or with key informants.

### **C Socio-economic factors and livelihoods**

The population's relationship with water will be largely affected by the socio-economic context and its means of livelihood. The water situation will, indeed, be very different depending on whether you are

**Table 23** Water resources in Afghanistan, and how they can be captured

The geology of Afghanistan is extremely complex, as is, therefore, the related hydrogeology. Water resources and the way that they are captured can be classified according to the following typology.

Type	Resources	Location	Means of capture
Surface water	Large scale	Large valleys	Direct tapping Derivation dams and canals
	Small scale	Small valleys	Direct tapping Derivation dams and canals
	Rain water	In the north	<i>Kanda</i> (water reservoir, average content 180m <sup>3</sup> )
Underground water	Infiltration water	Springs in mountainous areas where infiltration and circulation of water in the geological substratum is possible	Spring catchments
	Upper table	In foothill colluviums	<i>Kareze</i> (underground canals dug in mountainside)
	Medium table	In the main alluvial terraces	Hand-dug shallow wells
	River table	In the extended river bed	Hand-dug shallow wells. This underground water has a quick recharge rate
	Deep table	In the large alluvial plains in south	Drilled wells, some of them are equipped with large pumps, with or without storage capacity ( <i>bowli</i> ). The rate of recharge of this underground supply is relatively slow
	Deep table	In the plateaux of the north, composed of loess	Due to the physical texture of the sediment, the rate of recharge is extremely slow

situated in an urban or rural setting, whether you are working with a pastoral population or with farmers, or whether you are in a refugee/IDP camp.

It is important to understand how these dynamics affect access to water by various population groups. In particular, the issue of **water rights** must be tackled. This can be done through a series of focus groups and interviews with key informants, coupled with observations.

 But be careful when raising the issue of water rights in a water-scarce environment, where access to water is a key (sometimes political) factor and potential source of conflict!

### 9.1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL SKILLS AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Over centuries, populations have found ways to manage water, whether it is scarce or over-abundant. It is not uncommon for groups or individuals with special roles and knowledge to be present in the local community (including spring finders, water managers, and underground canal and well diggers). It is crucial to identify them as early as possible in the process, not only because their competence could be vital to ensuring the programme's relevance and effectiveness, but also because not working with them might make you lose your credibility and jeopardise your relationship with the population.

*In many communities in Afghanistan, the mirauw, or 'water lord', manages the distribution of water between families. It is important to identify him and to involve him in the programme process.*

Local knowledge generally exists in regard to a variety of tasks relating to water and sanitation, such as sourcing water, the construction of water-related infrastructure, and the disposal of excreta.

### Irrigation context

In agricultural areas, where irrigation is common, there are a variety of **water rights** that interact with **land rights**. Who has access to upstream or downstream water intake? What are the financial expenses or labour duties of water users? E.g. related to water service, access to networks, repairs etc. What is the nature of inter-village relations in respect of the management of a common resource?

### Pastoral context

Much of people's time in a pastoral community is split between **looking for pastures** and **looking for water**. There are very complex **migration** lines from one watering point to another, and the **societal** elements (calendars of migration and others' social behaviours) can also be very complex, built on old and sophisticated knowledge of where and how to find water.

### Urban context

Dealing with water and sanitation at the community level is often vital, but it is difficult in situations where there is little group cohesion. In urban contexts, **traditional social networks have generally broken down**, and a new set of social relations have emerged that are often based on monetary factors or, in the case of slums, on survival strategies and identity factors. This can leave **certain groups particularly vulnerable** in terms of access to water and sanitation.

### Camp context

A camp is a **mixed society** where most traditional values are strongly challenged by **promiscuity** and the realities associated with an **artificial context**. Yet, various rules and values emerge in the course of the camp's development, frequently involving religion (such as where are women allowed) and politics (such as who runs the rebel group in charge of the camp). Additionally, relationships develop with neighbouring villages. These factors can also affect individuals' access to water.

### The spring finder

In many parts of the world, there are people renowned for their capacity to look for and find water. They often work for a salary, which is normally provided by the community or by the family requesting their assistance. It is important to identify if they exist, to get to know them, and to agree with the community ways of involving them in the project.

### The well-diggers

In many societies, there is a specific group or caste known as 'well diggers'. It normally handles not only the digging, but also masonry and other activities involved in establishing a proper well in a given substratum.

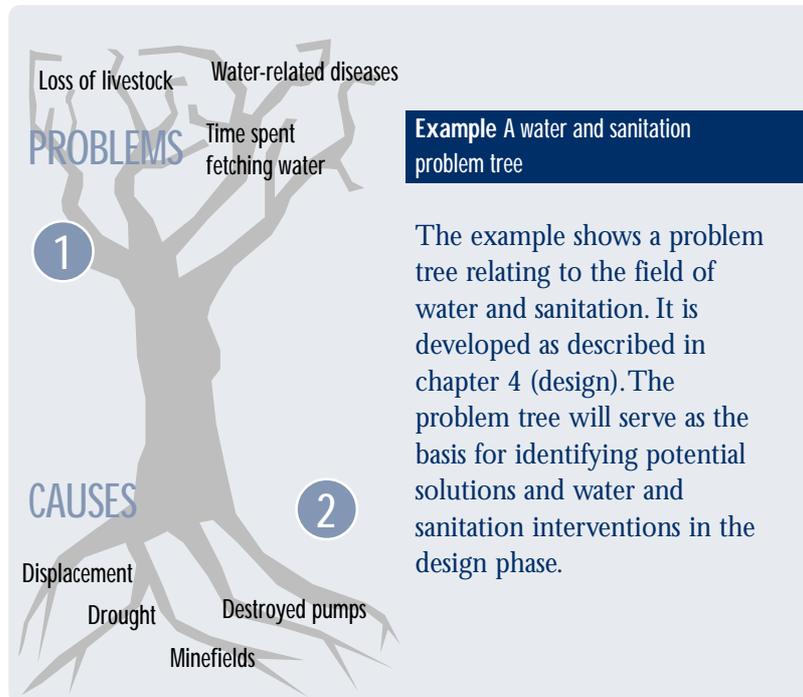
People who can play a role in the area of hygiene and sanitation include teachers, religious leaders, and traditional healers.

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One way of identifying the various individuals and groups involved in water and sanitation is to conduct a **stakeholder analysis** (using a Venn diagram, for instance), where focus-group participants describe their roles and relative importance.

### 9.1.3 IDENTIFYING NEEDS

 Needs can be identified through elaboration of a problem tree in **focus-group** exercises.



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## 9.2 DESIGN

Participatory design of a water and sanitation programme should establish:

- the objective of the programme;
- the type of intervention and technically and socially appropriate options;
- the area where the intervention will take place; and
- who will contribute to programme implementation.

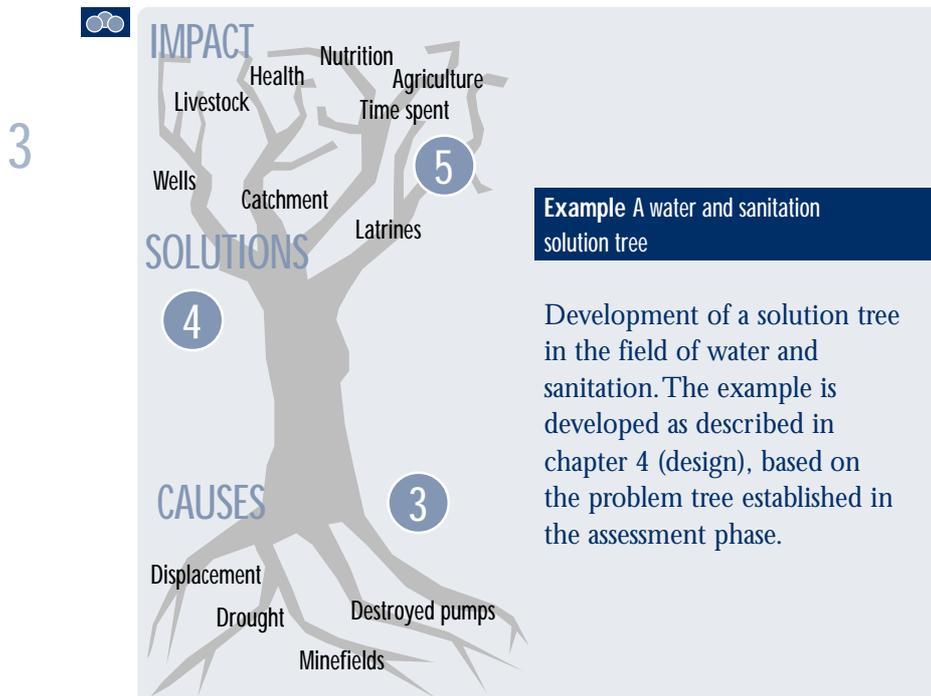
Given that water interventions usually concern population groups (neighbourhoods and villages, for example), the targeting of those to be assisted from the affected population is not an explicit part of the design, but is a consequence of the choice of intervention and the area

where it will be implemented. It is important, therefore, to consider (when choosing the type and area of intervention) the implications in regard to **who** will benefit from the programme.

### 9.2.1 SELECTING THE OBJECTIVE AND THE TYPE OF INTERVENTION

#### A Identifying possible solutions

The possibilities for a water and sanitation project are numerous. Where the objective is to improve the water supply, solutions include the installation of hand-pumps, the digging of wells or boreholes, and rehabilitating irrigation networks. When the goal is to improve sanitation, latrines, waste disposal, hygiene, and health education are among the possibilities. The choice will, of course, be determined by needs, and what is appropriate and socially and technically feasible in a given context.



One way of identifying solutions in a participatory manner is to go back to the problem tree developed above, and create a solution tree. It is also important to take into account the potential impact of the solutions that are proposed.

### **B Choosing from various technical solutions**

In this sector, the choice of technical solution should not only be guided by what seems **technically feasible** at the implementation stage (construction/drilling techniques, equipment used), but also by what is **socially feasible** and can be adapted to local conditions. This is where **local knowledge and techniques** can be most valuable: they can help to ensure that the programme is appropriate, and serve to strengthen local capacity and the sustainability of the programme.

**Sustainability** is key in a sector where projects often require a degree of maintenance. It is all too often the case that projects end up with broken and abandoned equipment that lead to public health problems and a feeling of disappointment on all sides. This can either be because the projects required too sophisticated technology, which the population could not maintain, because spare parts were not available in the region, or because the committee set up to maintain it lost interest, for example.



**These risks must be taken into account in the design phase.**

Engaging with the affected population, particularly with stakeholders who already have responsibilities in the water and sanitation sector, is an effective way of doing so.

Selecting between technical options can involve choosing, through participatory exercises, between traditional techniques and external technology, or a mixture of the two. For example, a focus group can be useful in clarifying the advantages and disadvantages of a traditional digging technique and borehole drilling.

#### Traditional well digging

This is a **low-cost** technique that is often well mastered in developing countries. Although in some instances it enables access to relatively deep water tables, it is normally used to procure **superficial underground water**.

#### Deep borehole drilling

This is much more **expensive** and complex, but allows relatively **easy access to the deep water table**, even if solid layers of ground have to be drilled through. It involves considerable logistics, although new light drilling machines have been designed.

### 3

In other situations, the crisis will have destroyed or disrupted local water and sanitation systems. The objective of a programme can be to re-establish these systems.

*In Afghanistan, the collection of waste and excreta in urban areas is done using the 'Karachi system', whereby it is collected in carts and used as a fertiliser in nearby fields. The system was disrupted by the war and by population displacement. Habitat, through the community forums programme in Mazar, revived this traditional system, which has both benefits for the urban population and for farmers in the area.*

This type of intervention can be highly pertinent in certain contexts, but it is important to avoid overlap with local systems already in place, or to engage in projects that the population is more than capable of carrying out itself.

*'NGOs come and clean irrigation canals, and after a few months they are clogged again. But we have been doing this work for centuries. We don't*

need their help to do that! They should help us do things we can't do ourselves!"

Shura leader, Nangarhar province, Afghanistan.

### **C Anticipating the social, cultural and economic impact**

It is also important to consider the potential social, cultural and economic consequences of water projects. They can have a profound effect (good and bad) on the local equilibrium, social relations and livelihood patterns.

In pastoral areas in the Horn of Africa, the establishment of permanent water points, while assisting pastoralists during periods of drought, have probably contributed to the sedentariness of nomads (who settle in areas where irrigated agriculture is a new possibility), and affected migration routes. This has profound social consequences, both in regard to these people's way of life, and in terms of relations between communities

## **9.2.2 SELECTING THE PROJECT SITES**

Water is a strategic resource, especially in water-scarce areas. Consequently, where you place hand-pumps, dig wells, or drill boreholes, for instance, are key factors in the design process. Of course, such choices are often determined by the location of water sources. But when there are several options, it is important to be aware that security and protection, as well as discrimination/minorities and impartiality, are often looming issues.

 In water-scarce areas, the location of water points is a strategic matter. If it is seen to favour one community more than another, it can create tension between them and put the security of your organisation at risk.

In some situations, the water project can *de facto* relatively privileged groups and individuals. For example, irrigation projects are likely to favour landowners, who are often less vulnerable than landless groups. But they can also benefit poorer groups if the project strengthens local

agricultural production, creates employment, and prevents population movement.

During the 1999-2000 drought in southern Afghanistan, NGOs considered drilling deep wells and digging *bowlis*, very powerful pumps that can reach underground water tables. But they faced a dilemma since these technologies with high pumping capacity risked depleting underground water stocks rapidly. Nevertheless, some NGOs chose to implement these projects, because if water were not made available quickly for drinking and agriculture, people would start to leave the area and move to precarious IDP camps.

These are difficult choices. Hence, it is important to **work with key stakeholders** when making these decisions, and to be explicit and transparent in regard to your choices. **Mapping exercises and transect walks** are key tools to assist in collective decision-making.

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Although the location of sanitation projects presents less strategic concerns, it can also have a bearing on security and protection. For example, the location of latrines and showers in refugee/IDP camps can support or undermine an individual's security depending on whether they are situated far from the camp, or in an easily accessible and safe area. Focus groups (especially gender-sensitive ones) with the people concerned offer a means of selecting project sites in a way that will take their specific security and access needs into account.

#### 9.2.3 SELECTING THE PROJECT PERIOD

The relevance and efficiency of a project is also related to when it is conducted. The transportation of emergency water supplies, for example, is expensive and involves considerable logistics; it thus requires planning. If they arrive too late (after people have started to suffer serious health problems or have moved, for instance), the project can fail to meet its objectives.

Identifying the apposite time to engage can be done most easily through participatory exercises, involving **calendars**, for example, on which project activities can be plotted. In the case of emergency missions, **criteria** concerning when to trigger an operation can be more appropriately defined with members of the affected population who best recognise the warning signs.

#### 9.2.4 DEFINING WHO DOES WHAT

It is important to determine the distribution of tasks ('who does what') in the design phase, in order that all aspects of the implementation phase run smoothly.

The various options for participatory implementation of water and sanitation projects are presented below.

## 9.3 IMPLEMENTATION

3

### 9.3.1 CHOOSING THE IMPLEMENTATION SET-UP

In most situations, local structures responsible for water issues already exist; they should have been identified in the assessment phase. It is important to work with them to ensure that implementation goes smoothly. How this is to be done can be decided collectively.

 One participatory approach is to conduct an analysis of the pros and cons of each of the options.

Direct implementation by the NGO	Subcontracting to an intermediary structure	Partnership with the local water company or local structure
Pros	Pros	Pros
Cons	Cons	Cons

Although this process—to be carried out in the design phase—might appear time-consuming, in fact, it saves time during the implementation phase, because it creates a sound basis for negotiation and problem solving.

Elements to define with key stakeholders include:

- Labour mobilisation.
- Procurement of raw materials (such as sand and stone).
- Organisation of the work.

 When involving the affected population by asking them to contribute to the project via the provision of labour, be careful not to shift from an instrumental approach to outright manipulation.

In a project proposal, the cleaning of latrines in an IDP camp by the residents was described under the chapter named 'community participation'.

3  In some situations, it can be appropriate to support the involvement of the affected population in project implementation through cash-for-work or food-for-work schemes. In such cases, though, you should be careful not to undermine activities usually carried out by the population without incentives.

Many NGOs in Afghanistan have been offered cash-for-work or food-for-work to be engaged in the rehabilitation of irrigation networks, *karezes* (underground water channels in mountain sides), and water evacuation channels. A perverse effect of these projects is that, in some areas, communities previously conducted these activities without external assistance. Now, villages do not carry out the maintenance, because they expect that an aid organisation will propose a cash-for-work or food-for-work arrangement.

### 9.3.2 SETTING UP OR IDENTIFYING A WATER COMMITTEE

In regard to most water and sanitation projects, it will be important to work with an existing committee or to create a new one for the purpose of the project. The committee will be responsible for implementation activities (organising, in most instances, the hygiene education associated with a water project) and for the maintenance of project outputs.

One way to do this is to work through locally organised committees. A certain level of care is required in establishing these committees, to prevent too much manipulation. Here, again, transparency in relation to identifying and nominating committee members is essential.

- ▶ Possible members of a water committee, such as elders, specialised workers and women's representatives, should be designated by the population in collaboration with local institutions.

### 9.3.3 ESTABLISHING A MAINTENANCE SYSTEM

A water and sanitation programme is not complete once hand-pumps are installed, latrines or sewage systems are in place, or an irrigation canal has been rehabilitated. Management, maintenance and repair issues have to be considered well in advance, especially to ensure that the project does not collapse once your organisation withdraws.

The time required for managing and maintaining the system and for solving problems come at a price. For example, repairing broken pumps, supplying gasoline for water pumps, and emptying and cleaning the latrine and sewage system, all have a cost. The earlier these issues are discussed, the better. Top-down solutions seldom work.

This means that you may have to ensure that future maintenance and repair issues can be financed and that the committee is viable. This can entail establishing **cost-recovery** mechanisms. **Capacity building**

**and training** committee members are also essential aspects of implementation.

In a coffee production area of El Salvador, small producers were compelled to buy water from large landowners because the springs were located on their land, and because, otherwise, herders would have to travel long distances to water their herds. A European Community Humanitarian Organisation (ECHO) programme funded a collective system for irrigation and water access. This programme included water committees (whose members were chosen from the affected population) and the system of water irrigation (pumps, water network, technical training) for the area). A committee was created for the purpose. Two years after its establishment, the committee is still functioning. New families have been added to the water network as the project has evolved. The committee takes care of repairs to, and maintenance of, the network, with those that are directly assisted providing monthly financial contributions. Once access to water was guaranteed, this committee expanded its activities to cover agricultural and livestock initiatives (the introduction of new crops and animals).

### 3

#### 9.4 MONITORING

Monitoring allows you to ensure that your programme goes according to plan, allowing for timely adjustments to reflect changes in the context or in regard to other influencing factors. Participatory monitoring of water and sanitation programmes should be rooted as much as possible in local water committees, drawing on existing groups or ones established for the purpose.

Issues to be considered include:

- evolution of the situation (including water availability and population density);

- outputs (wells, catchments and pipes, for instance);
- quality of the service; and
- the satisfaction of the population.

## 9.5 EVALUATION

The impact of water and sanitation programmes can take many forms and can be perceived in many ways. In a participatory process, it is essential to highlight the different questions and issues at stake through a collective exercise involving the various stakeholders. The process could result, for example, in a matrix like that presented below.

Issues	Related questions
<b>Impact on time spent fetching water</b>	What did/would people do with their time if they were not fetching water?
<b>Impact on the quality of water available at the household level</b>	What do/would people do with this extra water?
<b>Impact on smell in the area</b>	Do people really care?
<b>Impact on health due to improved water quality and a healthier environment</b>	Are the impacts real and quantifiable? Do people attribute these changes to the water and sanitation programme?
<b>Impact on settlement dynamics</b>	Will the water programme affect the movement of people (pull and push factors)?
<b>Sustainability issues</b>	Will the water and sanitation infrastructure last after the implementing agency's withdraw? Do water committees have the capacity and the means to ensure the maintenance of project outputs?

These are not easy questions to answer, but the only way to get an answer is to raise the question and to organise a debate on it.

The evaluation can also focus on the programme process: did people feel that there was sufficient consultation? Was the implementation set-up appropriate? Could some of the problems confronted have been avoided? (See chapter 7.)

## CHAPTER 10

# PARTICIPATORY HABITAT AND SHELTER PROGRAMMES

Human settlements cannot be reduced to components related to physical infrastructure. They represent a sector of intervention where many different factors interact. Climate, religion, culture, economics, ethnic identity, social and family values and systems of organisation, all interact with the region's topography, hydrology and geology, to determine the nature of a human settlement. Many emergency actors view the human settlement from the simple perspective of shelter. This might be correct when the issue is to protect the population in the short term from the sun, rain or cold, but, beyond the first week, the approach has to be modified to engage with other factors. The role of, and the possibilities offered by, participatory techniques in the field are presented in some detail in this chapter.

**A house is a living area, which evolves with the household.** It defines and limits a family's territory. The participation of the household is, therefore, essential in the design and construction of its living area.

Housing and human settlements are particularly subject to cultural and social specificities, which can vary between villages, neighbourhoods and even families. A shelter project will not be effective unless it takes them into account. Failure to do so can lead to:

- houses being abandoned;
- houses or building materials being sold;
- houses being taken down (levelled); and/or

- certain minorities or population groups being put at risk or excluded from a project (such as women or the elderly).

Furthermore, the involvement of affected populations in shelter programmes can have long-term positive effects on the population's resilience, notably when traditional building techniques are improved.

As in other sectors, it is important to avoid excluding particular groups, notably women. In many cultures, the home is the sphere of women; they manage it. Hence, it is essential that they be consulted, informed and involved in the project process, particularly in regard to:

- their expectations and needs in terms of privacy and security;
- the organisation of the house (kitchen and laundry, for instance); and
- the location of the house (its proximity to the water point and market, for example).

### 3

 Protection, security, impartiality and independence should be taken into account. In particular, land rights are often a politically and socially delicate matter, especially in conflict situations, where control of territory is at stake. You should thus have a precise understanding of the political and legal situation. It must be addressed from the outset to avoid problems later in the programme and creating security risks for people from the affected population<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Note that the present chapter does not cover specific issues related to refugee and IDP camps.

## 10.1 ASSESSMENT

### 10.1.1 WHO TO ENGAGE WITH

In this sector—involving individual, family and collective interests—there are four groups of stakeholders that you can engage in participatory strategies, each touched directly or indirectly by the crisis, and, in one way or another, part of the ‘affected population’.

**Table 23** The various stakeholders that can participate in a shelter programme

Stakeholders	Options for participation
<b>Local and municipal authorities, where these exist</b>	As a result of the growing trend towards decentralisation, local administrations often run basic social services and infrastructure and represent, in most instances, a rich pool of knowledge and expertise. Their role in preventing natural and technological risks (local authorities have the responsibility to identify the risks of each area and establish rules and laws) is paramount. They are also key actors in ensuring law and order, and in managing property matters and issues concerning land rights. It will be important to bring them onboard, with a positive attitude.
<b>Local organisations (NGOs and CBOs)</b>	Local organisations can serve as a useful and effective link with the population, increasing the efficiency of the international actor, while ensuring that the programme is more suitably rooted in socio-cultural terms.
<b>The small-business sector (such as masons and brick makers)</b>	The small-business sector can stimulate the revival of the local economy, supplying materials and skilled labour.
<b>Families and individuals</b>	Families and individuals are most interested in the programme, and are ready to be directly involved in its design and implementation.

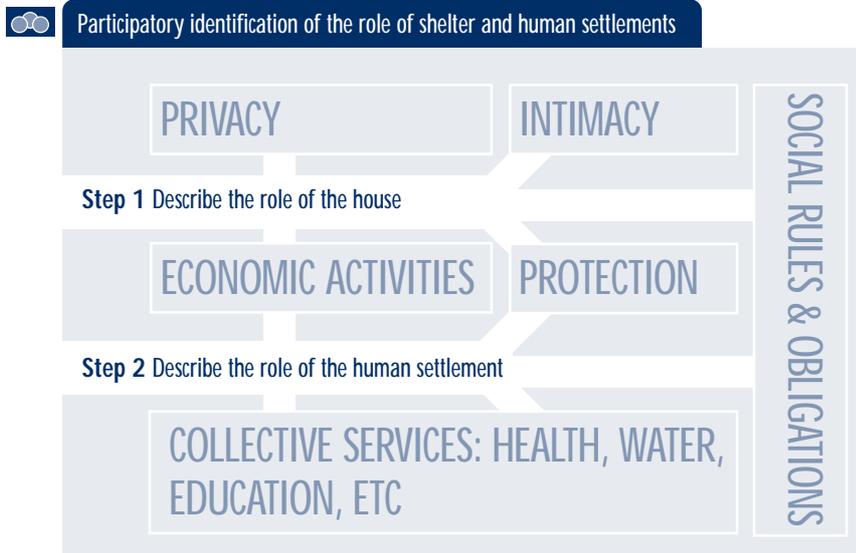
### 10.1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE OF SHELTER AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Understanding the role that shelter and human settlements play in the local culture and society is particularly important, as it will partly determine the type of shelter that should be provided and the house design.

The following graph highlights the main issues that should be discussed in the focus group. The objective is to describe the functions that a shelter should fulfil, and how this can be achieved.

During the shelter reconstruction projects that were launched following the earthquakes in Nahrin, **Afghanistan**, community representatives insisted that NGOs review their house design and build two rooms instead of one, as this was essential to guarantee that the privacy of men and women was respected.

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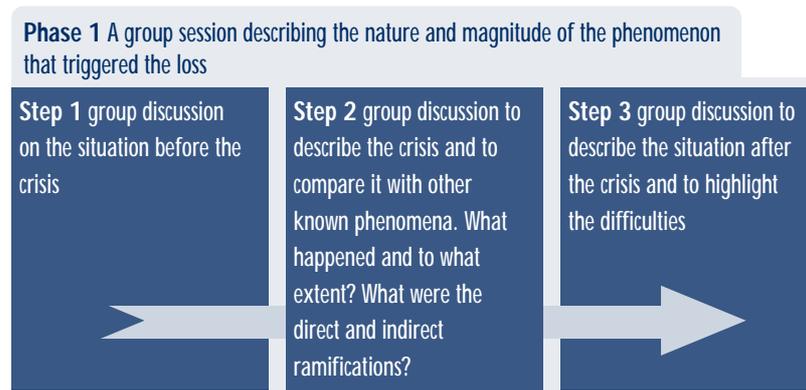
After the 2001 earthquakes in **El Salvador**, single women insisted that the sheeting provided for temporary shelters be opaque and strong. In the past, it had been translucent, making it easy to see when they were alone. Given that it could be easily cut with a machete, many women had been raped.

Separate focus groups can be organised according to gender, ethnic group or socio-economic status, to ensure that various perspectives are taken into account.

### 10.1.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM.

The nature of the problem has to be clarified.

- 
 Causes of the problem. Why is a shelter and habitat programme required? The issue here is not only to describe the crisis that resulted in the loss of shelter (such as an earthquake or war), but also to identify vulnerability factors (including poor construction techniques or materials and the type of ground on which the shelter was built).



- Causes of the difficulties encountered by local actors called to respond to the problem. Why are the population and the local authorities unable to deal with it on their own?



#### 10.1.4 IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SHELTERS AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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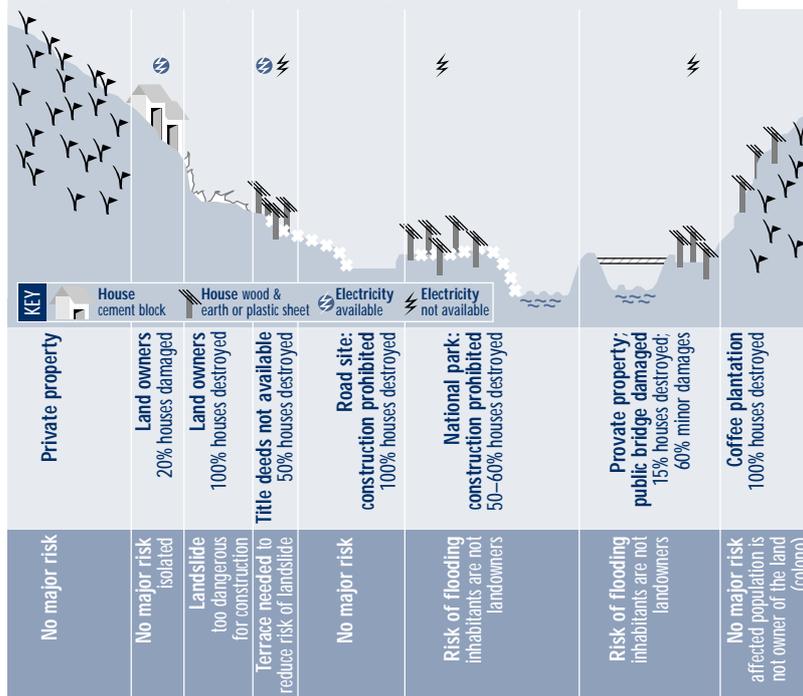
Participatory methods that bring together the population, local civil-society institutions and the local authorities are very useful in determining a number of factors that influence habitat and shelter programmes. Among them are natural risks and land and property rights.

The following figure presents the various steps that should be considered in describing these factors.

### Determining factors that influence habitat and shelter programmes

- 1 Land availability
- 2 Existing assessments and plans
- 3 Identification of the various types of land rights and land laws that can co-exist (traditional and modern, for instance)
- 4 Access to basic infrastructure and services, and to economic opportunities (like markets and employment pools)
- 5 **Participatory mapping exercises and transect walks** can be organised to provide detail on the existing situation, known risks and existing land reserves.
- 6 At the end of the exercise, a shared assessment is generated of where land is available, its characteristics and its civil-engineering requirements, as well as of the deficit that exists between needs and reality in regard to basic services
- 7 Participatory planning of how these macro needs can be met can be carried out.

Figure 27 Land use map for the community of San Rafael Abajo, El Salvador



## 10.2 DESIGN

Participatory design of a shelter programme needs to address the following issues:

- the selection of households (targeting);
- the selection of sites;
- the house design;
- the choice of materials and techniques; and
- the timeframe.

### 10.2.1 TARGETING

Most of the guiding principles on participatory targeting have been discussed in earlier chapters, which the reader should refer to. The following two points, however, are particularly relevant to targeting in relation to habitat/shelter and need to be discussed with local stakeholders.

## 3

- **Economic status** Too great a focus on the most vulnerable can sometimes result in people immediately reselling the house or construction materials that they have been provided with in order to address other, and, in their view, more important, needs.
- **Social impact** Receiving a house that has built using a considerable amount of construction materials can have an important effect on social and economic status. Perhaps assistance in the field of habitat is more prone to misuse and misallocation (in regard to client–patron relations) than food aid or the distribution of consumption items.

The targeting process should be highly transparent; the selection criteria and details of who will benefit from the programme should be circulated widely using various means. Redress and sanction mechanisms should also be discussed and established as part of the participatory process.

 Focus group on targeting in shelter and habitat programmes: an agenda

**Step 1** Why target?

**Step 2** How to target? Identification of targeting criteria.

**Step 3** How to inform the targeted families?

**Step 4** How to deal with the frustration of non-targeted families?

**Step 5** How to manage complaints?

**Step 6** How to respond to social pressure and the risk of incorrect attribution?

**Step 7** How to handle the potential sale of construction items after their distribution?

 Be careful not to exclude minorities and vulnerable groups that are not able to contribute their time or labour to the programme, such as widows, single mothers and the elderly. It is possible to find ways in which they can also benefit from, and contribute to, the programme.

In many cultures, for instance, widows or single mothers live with another family or with members of their extended family. One way of targeting them is to provide building materials that can be used to enlarge or improve the family home, instead of supplying a single woman with a house of her own. This can also aid her integration into the household.

### 10.2.2 DETERMINING POSSIBLE HOUSE DESIGNS

Determining the house design involves three steps, which are taken in parallel, and in the following order.

- Choosing the programme site.
- Selecting the programme approach.
- Designing the house.

#### A **Choosing the programme sites**

Issues concerning access to land and property are addressed at this point. It is essential, therefore, to understand the stakes and their implications for the affected population. For example:

- areas are now (or already were) too risk-prone or ill-suited to house construction (such as after an earthquake or a landslide);
- the land is the private property of an individual or institution, which permits households to settle there in exchange for their labour. (The *Colonos* in El Salvador, for instance, where people work for large landowners, who often exploit them, in exchange for the right to live on their land); or
- the sites are strategically or economically important to certain stakeholders (like areas in rebel zones and regions coveted by multinational corporations).

Selecting sites in a participatory manner can help to address these and related protection issues. Discussions can be held on the consequences of:

- building the new house *in situ* (or rehabilitating the previous one);
- moving a household whose home and land have disappeared or are located in an area that has become too dangerous;
- shifting the entire affected population to an equipped site (existing village or neighbourhood); and
- creating a new neighbourhood.

 The choice of site is very sensitive to property and economic interests. You should be careful not to reinforce the vulnerability of particular groups by promoting certain technical options. For instance: creating temporary lodgings close to *maquiladoras*,<sup>16</sup> or providing households with a source of temporary employment, but not with access to permanent housing or services.

### **B Selecting the programme approach**

All crises do not result in the complete destruction of human settlements. The shelter approach that you adopt will be selected according to the extent of the damage, as well as the socio-economic and cultural context.

- Temporary solution.
- Light rehabilitation of partly destroyed habitat.
- Extensive rehabilitation.
- Total reconstruction.
- A combination of the above.

The findings from the participatory assessment will enable alternative approaches and technical options to be identified and discussed. It is always interesting to put on the table information and experiences to show participants that their problem is not unique.

Next, you should analyse the various technical options that are available for your chosen approach, and weigh up their respective advantages and disadvantages.

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<sup>16</sup> Maquiladoras are companies that settle in countries where labour is cheapest, bringing in raw materials and exporting the final product, such that there are no benefits to the host country. They leave the country as soon as a cheaper source of labour materialises elsewhere.

**Table 24** Analysis of comparative advantages and disadvantages of different technical options in a shelter/habitat sector

	Most appropriate context	Advantages	Disadvantages
Temporary shelter			
Intermediate shelter*			
Prefabricated			
Final house			
Distribution of building materials			
Others (such as through local business or local micro-finance schemes)			

\* An intermediate shelter programme involves providing a temporary shelter, and then developing it into a permanent house

## 3

### C Designing the house

This phase should enable you to identify collectively the materials required to build shelters that satisfy the needs and desires of the affected population, as described in the assessment phase.

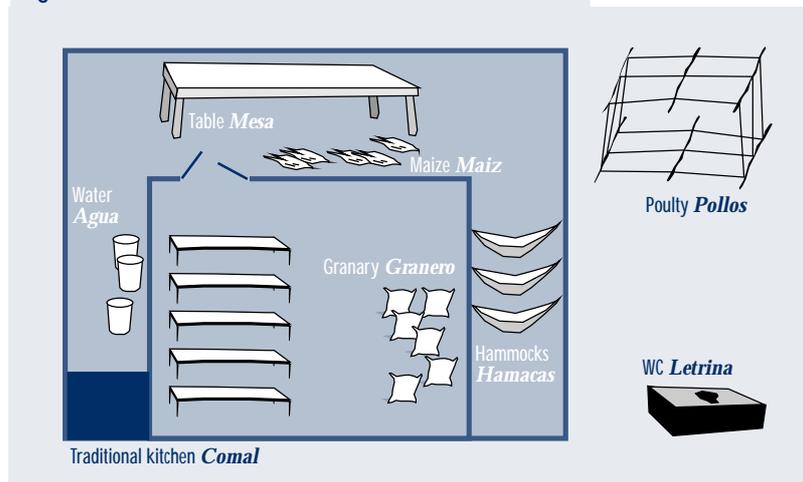
It is important to bear in mind that those assisted by shelter programmes will continue to modify their house beyond the lifetime of the programme.

Tools that support participatory house design include **field visits**, **photo displays** and **focus groups**.

Sometimes it is possible to **organise a visit** by a representative group of the affected population to another project. The feedback session and ensuing discussion can create a very good forum for house design.

It is very important to ensure that a number of **financial elements** are discussed with people that are to be assisted. A house represents an important asset.

**Figure 28** Plan for a house in a rural context in Central America



- Its size should be limited to prevent jealousy among non-recipients (but large enough to accommodate the entire family).
- It should remain within the equivalent of three-to-five years of the family's annual revenue to avoid immediate sale.
- It should not trigger too many recurring costs in terms of tax and maintenance, for example.
- The family must be able to meet the cost of making improvements to the house at a later stage, such as building extra rooms.

### 10.2.3 CHOICE OF BUILDING MATERIALS

In many contexts, the type and quality of materials used in shelter and habitat programmes have been a source of complaint and have caused major problems. In most cases, this is the result of the non-participatory selection of materials. It is vital, therefore, to ensure that a proper debate is held on the issue.

A table establishing the types of materials available and their respective advantages and disadvantages can be developed in a specific focus group.

**Table 25** The different types of materials used in Central America

	Context in which its appropriate	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Adobe</b>	Appropriate for rural context, but not for flood-prone areas. A lot of water is needed to prepare the raw materials (such as those required to make the bricks). The programme should be implemented during the dry season if the bricks are to dry properly before the walls are erected.	Natural resource, potentially available free of charge. Traditional, environmentally friendly technology. Can be produced at the family or group level. Can be easily reproduced with local resources (good in regard to developing the house). If well built, it is highly resistant to earthquakes.	Population can be reluctant, as adobe houses have been known to collapse during earthquakes. May be fragile. Construction and maintenance is time-consuming. When introduced as a new technology, it requires a lot of monitoring and technical extension work.
<b>Bahareque technique (layering of wood and earth)</b>	Appropriate for rural context, but not for flood-prone areas. Requires a lot of water. But the programme should be implemented during the dry season.	Earthquake resistant. Thin walls appropriate in environments where space is scarce. Highly resistant to soil vibration (produced by earthquakes and volcanoes). Walls can be constructed rapidly. Knowledge easily spread when local materials are available.	Low status in terms of social value. Increased risk of parasites. Requires maintenance. Essential requirements are wood or bamboos (in some places this increases the risk of deforestation and/or may lead to high costs being involved to purchase these materials)
<b>Cement blocks</b>	Appropriate when access is easy and transportation costs are low, particularly in urban areas.	Enables quick construction. Considered a modern material with a high social value. Provides a sense of security and solidity.	<b>Diffusion</b> This technique is rarely adopted because it is expensive and requires technical knowledge and expertise. [Not necessarily suitable in specific contexts (in areas with high temperatures this technique is not suitable due to low thermo isolation)]. Very high transport costs where road access is difficult

continued ►

Table 25 The different types of materials used in Central America continued

	Context in which its appropriate	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Prefabricated</b>	Appropriate when access is easy (large roads) and transportation costs are low.	Enables quick construction. Considered a modern material with a high social value. Provides a sense of security and solidity.	Very costly and limited by logistical constraints. No learning process; not replicable. Complex execution. Difficult for household to make additions later using same material.
<b>Iron sheet</b>	<p>During the emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly as a more secure alternative to plastic sheeting. After the emergency</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of small economic activities (ie commercial activities)</li> <li>• For reparation of partly damaged houses</li> </ul>	<p>Can be recycled and used in final house design. Light and not dangerous in the event of an earthquake. Easy to install Sense of security and privacy</p>	<p>Not perceived as temporary material. Can dramatically modify landscape if used widely</p> <p>Relatively costly</p> <p>Poor thermo-calorific characteristics (in hot countries, the temperature of iron houses is very high during the day and low at night)</p>
<b>Plastic sheeting</b>	Material for the acute phase of the emergency Valid in all contexts	<p>Low cost</p> <p>Can be erected quickly</p> <p>Light and not dangerous in the event of an earthquake</p> <p>Perceived as a temporary material.</p>	<p>Will not contribute to making the temporary solution sustainable</p> <p>If the quality is not good, it will not provide protection from the weather, privacy and intimacy, or security</p> <p>Plastic sheets are easily broken with scissors, knives or machetes; assets, food and seeds can be stolen; womens' vulnerability is increased, especially regarding widows, children and elders</p>



It is particularly important to consider local work patterns and schedules, and to ensure that livelihoods and coping mechanisms are not negatively affected by the programme. Activities that should be considered include:

- food preparation;
- childcare; and
- sowing, harvesting, watering and maintaining crops.

In **Colombia**, following the Bojaya massacre, the affected population gathered together in several *cabildos* (village assemblies). During these meetings, it:

- chose to move the entire village;
- made drawings to identify the location of the church, port, town square, town hall, and community meeting room; and
- designed the house that each household would take possession of (including the building materials and the techniques to be used).

Engineers hired by the Colombian government took the documents prepared by the population and drafted the technical plans.

### 10.3 IMPLEMENTATION

Building houses is an activity that people have been engaging in for centuries. In every context, local know-how will exist in relation to the soil type and how materials can be transported, for example. It is important to utilise it!

Local knowledge and techniques can be built on and reinforced via the introduction of innovations (like earthquake mitigation) that can be adapted to the local context. Capacity building in regard to the affected

population's construction skills can be a key component of implementation.

There are many ways in which the affected population can actively participate in the implementation of a shelter programme (see the graph below). The level and nature of stakeholders' contributions must be clearly defined in a participatory way during the design phase, through discussions with members of the affected population and other stakeholders.



3

Various set-ups can be organised to manage implementation in a participatory manner. For example:

- you can establish partnerships with local CBOs or institutions with an implementing capacity;
- you can subcontract various tasks (such as the transportation of materials or the preparation of bricks) to local stakeholders (like small businesses); or
- your organisation can assume responsibility for coordination and supervision, while households contribute labour and materials.

## 10.4 MONITORING

Although mostly covered in chapter 5, there are, nevertheless, a few issues specific to the shelter/habitat sector that need to be considered.

- **Technical quality** One potential source of problems is the belief that the construction of houses is easy because it utilises local expertise. In fact, it is often the case that only a handful of specialists possess these skills. Furthermore, knowledge of how to make bricks does not equate with ability to erect a proper wall. This is especially so when new techniques have been introduced (such as earthquake mitigation), notably in areas prone to natural disasters. Regular technical supervision and guidance is, therefore, necessary.
- **Impact on local markets** It is important to keep an eye on local markets, which can be affected significantly by the procurement of construction items. It is not uncommon to find some of the distributed materials in these markets.
- **Impact on the family** It is important to ensure that households are able and available to work on the shelter programme throughout the process (harvest earlier than planned, physical strain on the elderly or handicapped people, difficult for single women etc.).

▶ Different participatory mechanisms can be established for monitoring.

- Monitoring committees.
- Selecting designated persons with monitoring skills.
- Regular stakeholder visits to markets or other public places and discussion when unusual phenomena are detected; and
- Focus groups and interviews with households.

## 10.5 EVALUATION

A participatory evaluation should highlight the views of the affected population and other stakeholders in respect of:

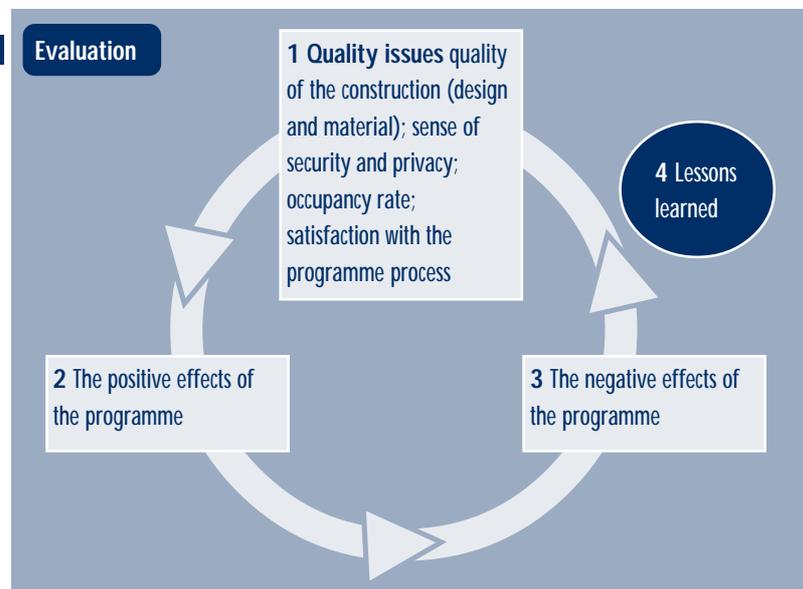
- the quality of the programme (technical design, location, and the availability of services, such as electricity, water and sanitation);
- positive impacts (were needs satisfied? Has the programme reinforced the security of family members?); and
- negative impacts (particularly on the environment, and in relation to security/protection and minorities/discrimination).

It is possible to organise field visits and group discussions on these issues. In most cases, groups will be mixed (in terms of gender and the stakeholders involved). Sometimes, though, a more considered and sensitive approach (culturally and politically, for instance) is required.

3



### Evaluation



## CHAPTER 11

# PARTICIPATION AND HEALTH PROGRAMMES

Community participation in health—one of the central tenets of the World Health Organisation's 'Health-for-All' strategy—provides a mechanism for people to participate in activities that have the potential to impact positively on their wellbeing. For those engaged in humanitarian action, however, this can be an alien and poorly understood concept. The urgency to respond and meet immediate needs on the ground tends to overshadow the complex and interacting needs, demands and expectations of affected communities. As a result, minimal effort is made to investigate the value of community participation, leading to a top-down, supply-driven approach, in which the delivery of medicines and the dispatch of expatriate doctors are seen as key priorities.

That conflicts and natural disasters impact significantly on health and health systems has been well documented. Health needs increase as access to medical services becomes more difficult.

Working with members of the affected population and with existing health systems, traditional or 'modern', can enhance the integration of health interventions into the health strategies of affected populations, thereby improving their relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

## 11.1 ASSESSMENT

The way that health needs are assessed, taking into account the different needs of each zone and population group, will determine whether the activity is successful. In most crises, however, participatory assessment is challenged by the pressure to respond quickly. Hence, interventions are not always grounded in an initial appraisal of needs, particularly as perceived by affected populations.

The first step is to decide exactly what information is needed and where to obtain it. A review of written materials, including medical records, attendance registers, reports and minutes of meetings, is crucial. Determining how health needs are identified, though, does not only mean collecting new information, facts and statistics, but also making good use of existing knowledge.

Following an NGO assessment, a remote 40-bed hospital in northern Afghanistan was rehabilitated and supplied with material and human resources. However, a continuous trend of under use—only one or two patients were brought in each week—called into question the relevance of the assessment. While the assessment emphasised NGO expertise ('providing a hospital service'), it gave insufficient attention to local health needs, constraints, capacities, practices and resources.

Different levels of analysis are also required.

### 11.1.1 UNDERSTANDING LOCAL HEALTH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

One of the most common weaknesses of health assessments in the humanitarian sector is the tendency to construct a purely epidemiological picture of the situation. Certainly, the epidemiological assessment is fundamental, but it often masks social and cultural specificities pertaining to the affected population. Throughout the assessment process, you can ask yourself: Am I paying sufficient attention to the social and cultural dynamics that affect health?

These specificities can include: the rate of attendance at health centres and the population's perception of them ('I only go when all else has failed, because those who go always die'); the use of traditional health practitioner networks and the employment of practices inspired by religious beliefs (traditional healers and plant medicines, for instance); the population's trust in the health practices that you are promoting (degree of acceptance by local leaders and their reaction); and the affected population's perception of the damage caused to the health infrastructure by the crisis.

*In Afghanistan, the pharmacy is one of the most popular shops in the bazaar, present in any village, and often run by a person with no medical training. The population regularly consumes drugs (particular via injection) that are often bought without a medical prescription.*

*In a remote area, under-serviced in regard to the health infrastructure, an NGO set up a clinic with a medical doctor, specifically trained in administering drugs. Some population members, nevertheless, refused to attend the clinic. As one woman explained: 'They don't even have a real doctor there. They only give little white pills, and not the coloured ones, and they refuse to give injections'.*

To help understand these issues, it can be very useful to establish a **community profile**. Focus groups can be organised to address the following questions.

- How is the society organised? What is the composition of the affected population (in terms of gender, age and ethnic group)?
- How is the population distributed geographically in the area?
- What health services and practices exist, both traditional (related to religion and witchcraft, for instance) and 'Western'?
- What is the distribution of health centres and practitioners, both traditional (including the house of the Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA)), and 'Western' (such as the vaccination centre)?

- Are social structures, networks or key individuals active in the health sector (health committees, networks of community health workers, nurses)? What is their position in the population?

 Tools available to tackle these questions include **mapping** (showing the distribution of health structures, for example), and a **stakeholder analysis** (see below).

Observation techniques provide an opportunity to examine the way that a health infrastructure or mobile team functions. Informal discussions can also be held on site, such as in clinic waiting rooms, or in the home of the TBA. If such sites are selected, it is important to ensure that you hold discussions in a variety of places, to avoid bias in relation to the collected information (the population attending the clinics may constitute a minority, for instance).

 Incorporating the characteristics of specific groups can enrich the community profile. They include:

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- the views of certain religions in regard to blood transfusions;
- the values of certain population groups in relation to birth control; and
- the perceptions of certain illnesses and diseases (for example, the marginalisation of patients with HIV/AIDS, and the association of disease with curses or divine punishment).

Specific **focus groups** can be organised around these issues.

 You should exercise care in regard to the composition of the focus group. Individuals, particularly those affected by a disease or health problem, should feel comfortable in speaking.

 It is useful to put together a compendium of local diseases, vectors, therapeutic plants, and health practitioners. This is what you should refer to when discussing health issues with members of the affected

population. It is important to ensure that there are no misunderstandings. Furthermore, people are more likely to extend their trust to those who they feel understand their concerns or are at least making an effort to do so.

Finally, health professionals tend to see specialised medical knowledge as essential to planning and decision-making. It will be very important, therefore, to understand the nature of interactions between health staff and members of the affected population.

### 11.1.2 UNDERSTANDING WHO IS WHO

In many situations, humanitarian actors are a substitute for local health systems, either because of circumstances, or because they have failed to acknowledge these systems in their assessment. This not only compromises the sustainability of health interventions, but it can also undermine local health capacity in the long term. It is important, therefore, to work with existing health structures throughout the project process.

Under the Taliban regime, in **Afghanistan**, the degree of involvement by the MoH remained minimal. Most health assessments were conducted outside of state institutions, with relief aid constituting the primary tool of NGO engagement.

Doctors, teachers, nurses, social workers, traditional healers, MoH personnel, and community health workers are in regular, if not daily, contact with the affected population. Their relationships with the population, their practices, and their perceptions of local health patterns, not to mention their technical and psychological *savoir-faire*, are important sources of knowledge. Working with them can help you to ground your intervention in local networks and to increase the relevance of your intervention to the population.

⚠ But this does not mean that all health professionals know perfectly the environment that they are working in. They are sometimes unaware of certain realities on the ground and do not appreciate the existence of informal support networks and alternative practices. Involving these professionals, therefore, should not exclude direct consultation with the affected population.

Carrying out a **stakeholder analysis** (using a **Venn diagram**, for example) can help you to identify who you should be working with. In particular, the relationships and power dynamics between various health practitioners and the affected population, as defined by participants (particularly non-health professionals), can be most informative.

▶ Local health professionals are often respected and influential members of the community. Their involvement in a programme can strengthen its legitimacy. They can act as an intermediary between your organisation and the population, especially when the project involves addressing certain beliefs and customs.

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#### 11.1.3 ESTABLISHING THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PICTURE

To construct an epidemiological picture of the area, data gathering on morbidity and mortality patterns can be carried out through MoH institutions. **Working in collaboration with local administrations is crucial**, but, in conflict situations, the legitimacy and authority of the state may be contested by national and international actors, and even by affected populations.

The epidemiological picture can be validated and enriched using participatory methods; the objective is to understand the prevalence of disease and disease vectors by zone and population group. Focus groups involving different population groups and interviews with local health professionals (see section 11.1.2.) can be useful.

 Several techniques are available, such as the collective elaboration of **calendars**, to identify the seasonality of certain diseases and their association with vectors (like mosquitoes and flies) and natural phenomena (such as floods and droughts), and **incidence mapping**, showing the vulnerability of specific zones and population groups.

#### 11.1.4 IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC NEEDS

Developing an accurate understanding of a community's needs, resources, social structure, values and coping strategies is critical to identifying key issues related to health beliefs, health-seeking behaviours and the practices of health providers.

 At this stage, a collective exercise to pinpoint and prioritise needs and demands can occur. Specific groups identified in the stakeholder analysis can be invited to attend. Participatory analysis of needs—such as via the elaboration of a **problem tree**—can be a strong basis for participatory programme design.

In south Sudan, the ongoing war and the lack of local health counterparts encouraged the international community to develop health projects. An NGO thus engaged directly with members of the population, conducted a participatory assessment that combined semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and discussions with key informants. Men and women in all parts of the region were asked about their health priorities. River blindness (or onchocerciasis) was flagged as a key concern. In partnership with the agency coordinating the Southern Sudan Onchocerciasis Control Programme, the NGO developed a project to educate local village-level health workers and to train volunteers.

## 11.2 DESIGN

### 11.2.1 DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME

The main health problems identified in the assessment phase (causes and implications) can be ranked using **problem and solution trees**. This exercise often reveals different priorities to those perceived by humanitarian aid organisations.

An immediate effect of a crisis is the disruption of health systems, including disease prevention and control programmes. As a result, interventions place emphasis on disease monitoring and the control of large-scale epidemics, which tends to increase the focus on vertical programmes and the demand for curative care. Health systems operating in conflict contexts should ensure that not only are basic curative health services maintained, but also that preventive and public health services are developed. Such services can be efficiently implemented with the participation of local health networks (such as community health workers), and do not necessarily require expensive external inputs, thereby favouring programme ownership by the population and sustainability.

*In Tigray, Ethiopia, the possibility of establishing a community health system during the conflict in the mid-1980s was explored. A preventive approach was the priority, alongside improving the quality of the health service. Specific health programmes, involving farmers and the region's youth, were designed. They included a health education component and annual malaria campaigns and drainage programmes to dry swamps.*

 When consulting people on their health needs, it is common for the population to focus on highly medical solutions ('we need a clinic' or 'we need a surgeon', for instance), to the detriment of primary healthcare and preventive interventions that may be more appropriate. It can be important to resist such pressures, and to recognise the difference between needs and demands (see chapter 3).

### 11.2.2 TARGETING

Experience of the allocation of resources, not on the basis of health needs, but on the basis of ethnic and political priorities, demands caution when it comes to targeting. For example, the establishment of health services to serve populations that have been forced to relocate to camps may attract the attention of neighbouring populations that lack these services and legitimise relocation strategies. Refugee camps may also have better access to health facilities than host populations.

Before a strategy is agreed upon, it is important to explain clearly why certain groups or geographical areas are in most need of assistance, in order to minimise social friction and to increase transparency.

*In the mid-1980s, refugee camps in Honduras were offering prime medical care to Salvadorians, at a time when the local population was experiencing considerable difficulty in accessing health services. In agreement with the UNHCR and local authorities, the NGO responsible for healthcare decided to open a part-time outpatients department for members of the local population and to train Honduran health staff in administering essential drugs and carrying out minor surgery.*

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### 11.2.3 WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

In the stakeholder analysis, the advantages of employing local health professionals has been developed. Nevertheless, the issue of the **balance of power** must be considered carefully. When members of the affected population participate alongside health professionals and project managers, those with the greatest professional standing are likely to have a greater impact on the process. Participation should not narrowly consolidate medical power, at the expense of achieving broad-based local involvement. In some settings, there can be political and/or socio-cultural barriers to expanding community participation initiatives, which will require prudent analysis at the design stage, so that community participation does not constitute mere 'lip-service'.

In the 1990s in Cambodia, many so-called community health projects failed to acknowledge the nature of the communist regime and its impact on social relations, and the fact that traditional systems of social organisation did not entail strong ties beyond those established within the nuclear family. Both factors explain, in part, why villagers were suspicious of community participation.

## 11.3 IMPLEMENTATION

### 11.3.1 WORKING WITH LOCAL STRUCTURES

At this operational stage, much can be achieved, and changes to implementation strategies can increase opportunities for learning.

Participation can translate into the establishment of suitable formal organisation (like a committee or board), which should be developed with significant community input, and which should have positive links with local MoH structures.

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In some situations, you can work in partnership with existing health entities that have a strong foundation within the local population. But be careful, experience shows that some structures can be more bureaucratic than participatory and established at the behest of governments and international agencies.

In Afghanistan today, a few NGOs have successfully engaged communities in decision-making by interacting and involving traditional leadership bodies. In the eastern province, community *shuras* have been instrumental in: selecting TBAs and women eligible for a proposed auxiliary midwife training course; providing accommodation for health providers; and choosing clinic sites and providing land for them.

In many humanitarian crises, Community Health Workers (CHW) and TBAs have reportedly played a crucial role in delivering services in very difficult circumstances, often where no alternatives were available. Their potential role should be acknowledged and supported, even though volunteers can only provide a partial answer to existing health problems.

During the Gujarat earthquake in India, humanitarian agencies worked with and employed members of the local population in a mental healthcare programme. Since expatriates could only assume a limited role in view of cultural, linguistic and social barriers, sharing skills with health volunteers was found to be the most effective way of providing care.

### 11.3.2 INVOLVING THE AFFECTED POPULATION: WHO HAS THE CAPACITY?

A key issue in ensuring the participation of affected populations in the implementation of health programmes is to make sure that they have the capacity to participate. The challenge is to identify who has and who does not have this capacity.

The time involved in participation also needs to be taken into account. In many instances, despite the emphasis on promoting the health of women and children, women, due to their heavy workload, can be virtually absent from local health committees.

After acute crises, for example, depressed, anxious or extremely upset people are not able to participate effectively. Individuals may no longer be able to process information or to make realistic decisions. Part of the health intervention, therefore, may involve setting up support groups in which people can talk about their problems and how to address them.

Conversely, groups that, initially, you might think could not be involved, may have the capacity to contribute strongly to a programme.

In Afghanistan, an NGO has trained community volunteers in treating bed nets (something that has to be done every year)—in return for a small commission. In fact, since sponging livestock and domestic animals with insecticide has proved cheaper and more effective than the standard technique of house spraying, full responsibility for malaria prevention is gradually being handed to local communities. Children are being taught how to spot breeding sites. The village health worker is then called on to organise drainage or treatment with larvicides.

Children can be involved in disease prevention and public health initiatives, notably by conveying information to other children and their families. UNICEF has worked for many years in the high altitude valleys of Pakistan, areas that have a high incidence of goitre. Given that schoolchildren are among the few literate or semi-literate members of the community, it was decided to involve them in communicating a message about iodine salt distribution, as part of a healthcare programme. A popular local story was adapted for the purpose and printed, thereby also serving as elementary reading material. Schoolchildren were able to spread the message among local families.<sup>17</sup>

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In East Timor, under the former Indonesian health system, which was characterised by a top-down approach, community participation was less of a priority. After the regime fell in 1999–2000, the implementation of health committees met with little success. An evaluation showed that the establishment of these health committees was nothing other than a quick-fix strategy to shift responsibility to communities.

#### 11.3.3 SUSTAINABILITY

In a context of war and political instability, the financing of health systems usually decreases as a result of a decline in the capacity of the state. Given the conditions in countries affected by conflict, inputs, such as drugs, are provided free-of-charge during emergencies. If and when

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<sup>17</sup> UNICEF experience in Pakistan, 'News from UNICEF'. Number 114, 1983. pp12-14

the situation improves and moves into a development phase, drugs are usually provided on a cost-recovery basis, a participatory and complex process that requires experience, public information and transparency.

- ▶ This is why establishing strategies to ensure the sustainability of the intervention (notably when it involves creating or supporting health structures), such as setting up **cost-recovery systems** and **integrating interventions into state structures** (MoH), and **training local health personnel**, are key elements of implementation. Putting these systems in place via a participatory process can ensure that these strategies are locally appropriate and feasible.

In the municipalities of Luanda, Angola, the public health system suffered as a result of low morale and the poor salaries paid to staff. Consequently, personnel often engaged in rent-seeking behaviour. The NGO in charge of medical care thus designed a new system, whereby the population would make a financial contribution towards the cost of drugs. The revenue was used to provide bonuses to health workers.

- ▲ Be careful when setting-up cost-recovery systems to ensure that they do not become a source of discrimination. It is important to clarify whether the contributions are in line with what the affected population is able to give. In some cases, it may be necessary to recognise that the centre simply cannot be self-sustaining.

In the Kasai region, a remote part of Eastern DRC, NGOs attempted to introduce a healthcare centre that would be sustainable for future use, which was why the programme included a cost-recovery system. However, at the end of the programme, it was found that the healthcare centre was not sustainable, primarily because the population was so isolated and had no access to cash. The centre thus had to depend on the aid organisation.

## 11.4 MONITORING

In most emergencies, the monitoring of health needs focuses substantially on quantitative targets (such as coverage in regard to measles vaccinations, the number of new cases diagnosed, and admission and discharge rates), with participation often limited to the collection of health data.

*During the 1995 floods in Bangladesh, trained health volunteers responsible for monitoring diarrhoeal diseases, particularly cholera, were actively involved in house-to-house case detection.*

While there is regular consultation between health providers and members of the affected population, it is less frequent than one might expect. To ensure that lessons are learned and to solicit the views of members of the population, participatory methods that go beyond simple data collection and the use of checklists should be employed. In addition to supportive supervision and regular follow-up, focus groups and semi-structured interviews can generate additional information on people's needs and their changing priorities.

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## 11.5 EVALUATION

When assessing the effects of emergency health programmes, changes in populations, individuals or health environment are considered. Interviews with a sample drawn from among the affected population are usually a mandatory part of the evaluation of humanitarian assistance.

Whether an external or internal evaluation, the process of consulting members of the affected population and health services is often based on a top-down approach. Consequently, the perceptions of experts and health managers and members of the affected populations, in regard to performance, can diverge significantly. To garner the community's views

on the positive and negative impacts of health programmes requires myriad skills and experience. A combination of interviews with individual households and focus groups can be very productive, although it may be necessary to ensure the **confidentiality** of some individual interviewees.

A complementary means of identifying the key issues is to request that health providers, health committees and volunteers involved in the programme carry out part of the evaluation to ensure that those being assessed feel included and valued. The importance of using evaluation results to strengthen humanitarian programmes and to make them more effective has been recognised for some time, but the evidence suggests that they are rarely shared with communities.

All too often, only health staff report on the evaluation results. Affected populations usually have little influence over them and how they are reported. In addition, many written evaluation reports are not intended for, and hence not designed to be understood by, anyone who does not work for the MoH, an NGO or a funding agency.

While some appropriate mechanisms, such as meetings and discussions, are needed to ensure proper feedback, it is essential that the presentation does not merely become an exercise in adding up numbers, and that the affected population understands the meaning of the results and can influence the outcome.



## CHAPTER 12

# PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION

Education traditionally falls within the development sphere; it is not generally considered to be a part of humanitarian interventions in crisis situations. However, education is increasingly a key component of humanitarian responses, and often accompanies other types of programmes. Shelter reconstruction programmes frequently involve the construction of schools and kindergartens, while nutrition and mother-and-child health programmes sometimes include welcome centres for women and children, with health education components.

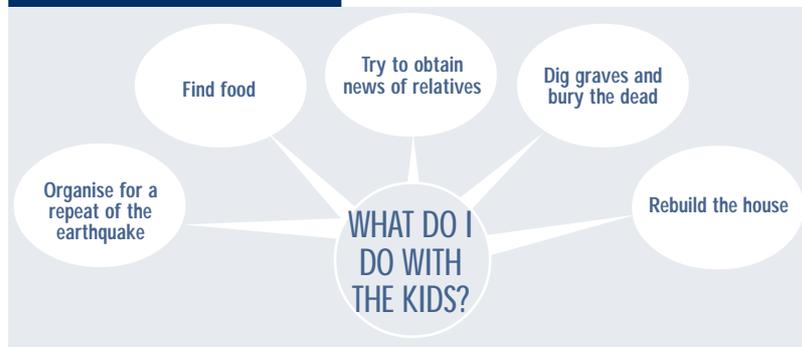
For the purpose of this handbook, this sector is defined as including all programmes that serve to respond to the educational needs of children, either temporarily (such as education centres in IDP or refugee camps and childcare facilities in welcome centres for the victims of natural disasters) or in the longer term (including the reconstruction of school buildings, and the replacement of supplies that have been lost in a crisis).

Educational programmes have several implications:

- **Gender** restoring school activities and opening childcare centres provides women with more time to engage in other activities.
- **Psychosocial issues** an educational/institutional framework can be used to manage post-traumatic syndrome.
- **Childhood issues** education contributes to the reconstruction of a support framework for child victims of a crisis, re-establishing a routine, and to re-initiating the learning process.

- **Social reconstruction** educators and the school infrastructure are pillars of social life in certain cultures. Repairing these structures and/or contributing to educational activities can play a key role in rebuilding social relations.
- **Education *per se*** education programmes can help children to integrate into new cultures or to maintain their own culture (such as in a refugee situation).

#### What do I do with the kids?



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#### Why is participation important in this sector?

- Education is, above all, about the transfer of knowledge. The participation of affected populations enables better adaptation of knowledge to local conditions and specific needs.
- Schooling and educational infrastructure, working patterns, and the content of the curriculum are often guided by principles and prerequisites that are highly specific to each country/culture/ethnic group. Engagement with affected populations is necessary to understand, respect and adopt these principles and prerequisites.
- Taking into account the expectations of the person who will receive the education, and involving him/her in the design of the learning strategy, is fundamental in certain cultures.
- Participation in this intervention sector can be an important means of enhancing the protection of children.

## 12.1 ASSESSMENT

The assessment should aim to clarify:

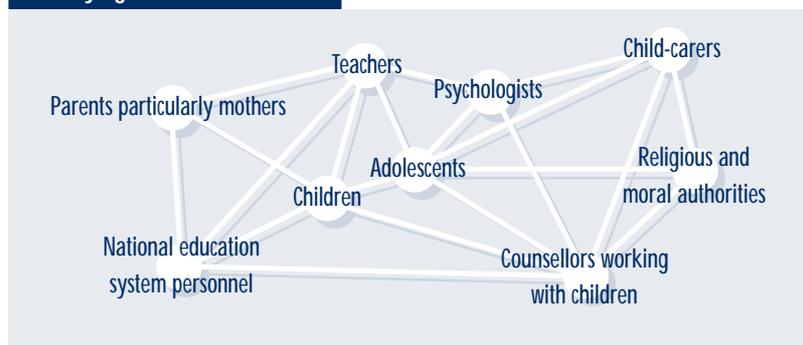
- what the education system was like before the crisis;
- who was in charge of it;
- whether there is a functioning institution and whether former staff have survived the crisis and are willing to be remobilised; and
- whether there was existing capacity for trauma management, either within the educational system or the traditional/modern health system.

This can be done through a participatory approach, in three steps.

### 12.1.1 IDENTIFYING WHO TO WORK WITH

Many community members will play an educative role in the life of infants, children and young adults. Whether their role is formal or informal, it is important to involve these individuals in the various stages of an education programme, in order to gain specific insights on the population's education needs, and to integrate activities into community life.

#### Identifying who to work with



Under the Taliban regime, in Afghanistan, the education of girls was strictly forbidden, and, in most instances, that of boys was limited to religious instruction by the village Mullah. This situation prompted some educated women to organise clandestine schools in their homes, to ensure that girls received an education and that boys' education was complemented with non-religious elements.

In post-Taliban Afghanistan, education became a priority in the reconstruction programmes. It was important to recognise the role of women who had informally acted as teachers. At the same time, ensuring the attendance of girls and introducing non-religious curricula requires that religious and moral leaders are consulted and involved in the new education process—to help overcome certain cultural and religious barriers.

### 12.1.2 DESCRIBING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

#### A **Before the crisis**

Focus groups can be organised to construct a picture of the educational sector **prior to the crisis**. Elements to consider include:

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- how the education system functioned;
- the type of infrastructure;
- the profile of personnel;
- the profile of those attending and not attending the schools (by gender, age group, socio-economic status);
- educational profile (agricultural schools, religious schools, national system);
- capacity, in terms of the number of students, and standard of the curriculum (primary, secondary, university);
- the role of educators in the local culture; and
- the role of parents in their children's education.

Discrete focus groups, separating parents, teachers and children, can be a useful way of garnering various perspectives.

## **B Understanding the impact of the crisis on the education system**

Key elements that should be assessed include:

- the extent and nature of the damage to the education infrastructure;
- the availability of supplies for schooling;
- deaths, disappearances or departures of educators and teachers;
- increases and decreases in the school population (according to the level of education);
- modification of the needs/expectations/required methods of teaching due to:
  - trauma caused by the crisis;
  - changes in the average age and in gender distribution;
  - the different languages that need to be taken into account; and
  - the inter-cultural conflicts that need to be managed.
- effect of the crisis on access to schools:
  - in terms of security (children afraid to go to school alone, for fear of being raped or forcibly recruited into armed groups); and
  - in terms of physical access (destruction of roads, distance too great).
- loss of one or several school years.

 A comparative analysis of the situation before and after the crisis is useful to clarify its impact. In the case of population displacement, maps can enrich the debate. Problem trees are also helpful in aiding group discussions (see chapter 3).

### **12.1.3 IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITISING NEEDS**

This phase is fundamental because of the diverse range of needs that may have to be addressed. A participatory analysis of solutions (their advantages and disadvantages), with parents, teachers and representatives of the national or local education system, can help to identify solutions relating to:

- the type of programme (reconstruction of schools, distribution of supplies, hiring and training of staff, opening of day-care centres for children and multi-language programmes, for instance); and
- the coverage of the programme: which populations should be targeted? What are their specific needs?

 Constructing **problem and solution trees** is again a useful way of defining priorities. You should be careful that the concerns of minorities or groups that were previously excluded from the education system are heard and considered.

**Interviews with key informants, random interviews and focus groups** can help to collect, quickly and relatively safely, the required information. It is just as important to engage with children and to solicit their views on their needs and how they might be met, as it is to question adult members of the affected population. The perspectives of children are often missing, despite the fact that they are the primary targets of such programmes.

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In Goma (DRC), many schools were destroyed as a result of the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano. Families sought refuge in neighbouring villages and thus sent their children to local schools. While UNICEF and other organisations were rebuilding the destroyed schools, Atlas Logistics launched a programme to increase the capacity of schools in host neighbourhoods (larger classrooms, more stationery, more furniture). The needs assessment was carried out through focus groups with school staff and parents' associations.

## 12.2 DESIGN

The aim of the design phase is to identify:

- the objective of the intervention;
- the activities involved;
- the people who will benefit; and
- how the programme will be implemented.

### 12.2.1 DEFINITION OF THE OBJECTIVES AND THE TYPE OF INTERVENTION

It is very important to clarify the objectives of an education programme. A large meeting, followed by small **focus groups**, composed of educators, parents, students, and staff from the local/national education system, can help to do this.

 Why put education high on the list of priorities in times of crisis?

- to ensure that children are not abandoned in the street?
- to prevent trauma?
- to prevent loss of education?
- to provide a place where they can be fed and vaccinated?
- to facilitate protection and prevent rape and other forms of aggression?
- Etc.

Only when these questions have been answered collectively can the design process begin.

Once the objectives have been clarified, it is possible to plan and design, in a participatory manner, the required infrastructures, human resources, teaching equipment, and relations that might have to be established with the administration or institutions in charge of any remaining system of education.

Consulting children can yield original suggestions. Methods to encourage child participation can include drawing and storytelling.

- ▲ But be careful: specific skills are necessary if the participation of children is to be authentic and efficient. It may be necessary to recruit staff with experience of working with children. In many cases, children can highlight specific issues and problems that are relevant to them, such as child abuse, rape, violence, forced labour and gender segregation, especially in crisis situations.

### 12.2.2 TARGETING

The selection of people to be assisted from the affected population can occur in a participatory manner. Several focus groups can be convened to analyse and answer the following questions.

- Who needs the programme?
- Who will benefit most from it?
- Who, under 'normal' conditions, did not benefit from education?
- Why?
- How can these persons gain access to education?

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- ▲ You should be ready to manage situations where certain dynamics pertaining to discrimination and exclusion are inherent in the local culture (such as female access to education, and discrimination based on caste or ethnic group).

- ▶ In such situations, before targeting the marginalised groups, it may be important to work with key stakeholders who might be resistant to the process, such as heads of households and religious leaders.

It might be necessary to plan sensitisation campaigns, to ensure that members of the targeted population are able to attend education programmes, and that they are not be put at risk or exposed to discriminatory practices.

## 12.3 IMPLEMENTATION

### 12.3.1 GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Below are some of the key issues to consider in regard to implementation of a participatory process.

- Who will reconstruct the education infrastructure?
- Who will provide the necessary materials and supplies?
- Who will recruit the personnel?
- What will the community's contribution be?
- What is or should be the role of the national education authority, and how should I interact with it during implementation?
- Who will be responsible for the educational structure once my organisation departs?

The division of tasks between various stakeholders and participatory decision-making processes in education programmes can contribute to ensuring the continuity of the intervention. In non-conflict situations, maintaining a link with the national education system (ministry of education, for example) is desirable and even indispensable, especially when the aim is to integrate the programme into the national education system at a later stage.

-  Coordination with other structures, particularly national education authorities, when they are in place, is essential, since harmonising curricula is vital to ensuring that the education provided is relevant and recognised.
-  Existing committees can guarantee the participation of affected populations and can make decisions on the distribution of tasks at the community level (such as the participation of parents in the reconstruction), and can act as a link between your organisation and the national system.

Students can also be involved in programme implementation, as this can support their ownership of the school infrastructure and enhance their motivation to contribute to the school's life.

 The participation of children carries the greatest risk: on the one hand, there is a danger of manipulation or the exploitation of child labour. On the other hand, there is a risk that the programme will be conducted in a mechanistic way—the participation of children will simply amount to a 'decorative exercise'.<sup>18</sup>

*In the DRC (Goma), school reconstruction programmes were set up on a participatory basis, involving teachers, parents and children. The children assisted their parents by fetching water to make bricks. Obviously, it is important that this type of participation should not detract from their schooling.*

### 12.3.2 CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHOD

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Under normal conditions, a child will move from complete dependence on parents towards a state of interdependence. Education plays a key role in this process. During an emergency situation, education can be disrupted, and, along with it, the evolution of the child in terms of its independence. If autonomy and social processes are not stimulated, children may view dependency as the norm and hence become particularly vulnerable. The participation of children is one way of providing this encouragement.

Participatory techniques can support actions in the education sphere.

- Engaging in dialogue, as opposed to being directive, when giving information to children.
- Using drawing and games to share ideas and to communicate.

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<sup>18</sup> Hart, R. A. (1992). Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. Innocenti Essay 4, UNICEF, Centre international pour le développement de l'enfant, Florence (Italy).

- Taking into account voiced opinions when making decisions and negotiating.
- Inviting youngsters to participate in decision-making processes and in organising the election of committee representatives, for example.

Many tools and methods can be used to encourage children to participate and to express themselves, including drawings, storytelling and short plays.

▲ Remember that inviting children to express themselves through drawings, or to recount their own story, can bring back memories of traumatic events that they had buried. The personnel working with children have to be ready to manage sadness, aggressiveness, and other symptoms of post-traumatic disorder.

▶ Specific skills and guidance materials have been developed (manuals and case studies, for instance) to encourage the participation of children (notably by Save the Children and UNICEF). They can be very useful for preparing and training educators and facilitators involved in this kind of programme.

## 12.4 MONITORING

The advantage of working with existing structures (parents' committees and teachers, for example) is that monitoring can be done in a collaborative way. The affected population can be invited to follow the evolution of the education programme, to check that the curriculum is adapted to their children's needs, and to make suggestions on potential adjustments.

## 12.5 EVALUATION

 Social audits and focus groups with adults (parents, educators, or a combination of the two), children, or a mixture of parents and children, are distinct, but complementary means of appraising the impact of education programmes.

Always ask the people involved in the participatory process the following questions.

- Can you qualify whether the programme has made a difference to you and your children?
- How would you describe it?
- What could have been done better?

The ranking of issues that arise is a useful tool to guide future action, provided that the results are immediately shared and discussed.

# CONCLUSION

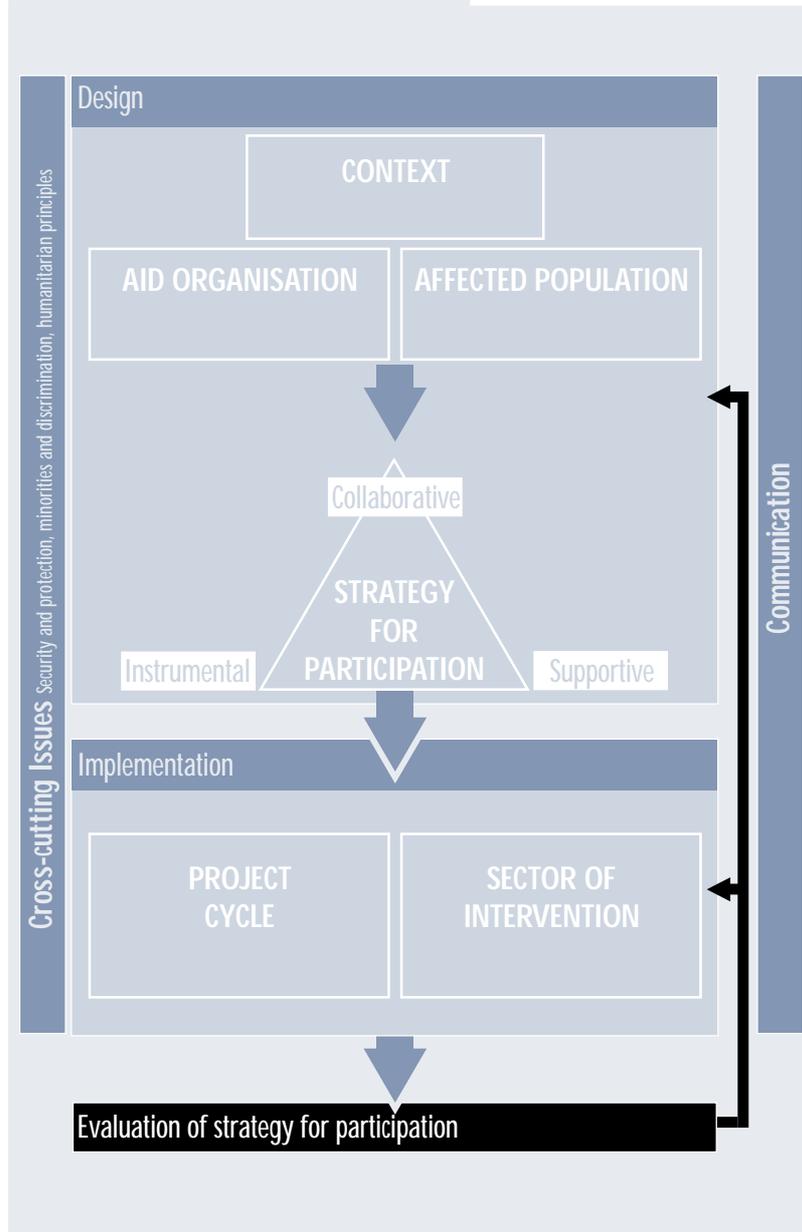
## Evaluating Your Strategy For Participation

The last step, which is often neglected, is to evaluate the actual participation strategy that you have put in place. At the end of the programme, but also throughout the project cycle, choices and the modalities of your participation strategy must be continuously monitored and appraised. The evaluation focuses on two main elements: the participation process itself; and the impact that the participation process has had on the programme.

No practice exists that should not be evaluated. Every practice requires, on the one hand, design, and on the other, evaluation. Practice should be continuously reinvented, and it can be reinvented so long as it is continuously evaluated.

*Paulo Freire*

**Figure 29** Evaluating your strategy for participation



The participation strategy is an inherent part of the programme process as a whole. It should be evaluated, therefore, like all other programme components in the final analysis. How and when this will be done must be defined in the ToR.

Of course, as described in chapter 7, the evaluation of the participation strategy can be carried out using participatory methods, too.

## A EVALUATING THE PARTICIPATION PROCESS ITSELF

The participation process can be evaluated according to a number of qualitative and quantitative criteria.

- The number and characteristics of the people participating in the programme, and the evolution of these criteria.
- The number and characteristics of the people participating in the various events relating to the programme (such as meetings, focus groups, workshops and discussion groups).
- The quantity and types of problems encountered, nature of complaints and how these have been managed. It must be noted that, at the beginning of a participatory process, an increase in the number of complaints is not necessarily a negative sign: it may be a positive indication that a space has been opened up for dialogue.
- The quality of the relationship between the agency and the representatives of the affected population (whether individuals or local structures), as shown in the minutes of meetings, for instance.

## B EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION ON HUMANITARIAN AID

The quality and pertinence of the participation strategy is measured according to its **impact on the local population** and its structures, as well as on the basis of **programme results**.

If the objective of adopting a participation strategy is to strengthen local capacity (collaboration strategy or support for local initiatives), evaluation of the strategy relative to this goal is essential. Even where you have opted for an instrumental approach—either by choice, or as a result of constraints imposed by influencing factors—evaluating the strategy and its impact on local capacities could be a very useful way of increasing your understanding and that of your organisation of participatory strategies and of informing future strategies.

The impact of the participation strategy on **populations** should be assessed at various levels. The following questions can be asked.

- Has the participation strategy led to better organisation of populations (in terms of decision-making mechanisms, problem solving, and the emergence of recognised leaders, for example)?
- Has the participation strategy enabled access to resources and mechanisms that will be useful to the affected population in relation to other types of action?
- Has the participation strategy reinforced the protection of the people involved, or has it increased the risks to which they are exposed?
- Has the participation strategy favoured the inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups? Has it contributed to their exclusion? Or has it had no impact on their status?

Finally, the choice of participation strategy can be evaluated according to its **impact on the programme** itself, as defined in the first part of

this handbook. Participation is meant to improve the quality of programmes, their pertinence, their effectiveness, their sustainability, and, eventually, the speed of their implementation. All of this can and should be monitored and evaluated in the short and long terms, using classical tools.

## C USING THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY FOR PARTICIPATION

Evaluating your participation strategy makes sense only if results are used to inform and adapt current and future participatory approaches. It can also enable questioning and analysis of influential factors.

- Was our understanding of the situation correct? Was our understanding of the society, the political, economic and cultural environment, and the impact of the crisis on the population, for instance, adequate?
- Did the agency have the capacity to attain its objectives? Were its practices appropriate, and its logistical and financial means, and its human resources, for example, sufficient?
- Was the choice of approach (instrumental, collaboration, supportive) relevant and appropriate?
- Was implementation of this strategy, throughout the project cycle appropriate?

Such reflections might lead to minor programme adjustments, to alterations in the strategy or might indicate more complex changes. Introspection can also lead to radical questioning of your modes of operation and that of your agency, in cases where they are revealed to constrain the adoption and implementation of successful participatory approaches.

In order to address such fundamental findings, it may be helpful to adopt a participatory approach in this final evaluation stage, involving not just local stakeholders, but, in the case of international organisations, in particular, headquarters representatives and donors!

This handbook has sought to present an approach, tools (recognising their limits and 'domains of validity'), and examples of good and poor participatory practices, coupled with warnings and words of caution. It adopts a reflective framework rather than offering clear-cut formulae, in order to whet your appetite, while recognising factors that may considerably limit the extent to which you are able to embrace participatory strategies in certain circumstances. Highlighting both operational and ethical incentives to adopt participatory strategies, it leaves you free to create your own participatory recipes, acknowledging the specificities of each humanitarian situation across a range of sectors and project phases.

**'It is not important that you came and asked us what we need. It is not important that you cannot solve our problems. Just we are happy that you came to discuss with us.'**

*Shura member, Nahrin (Afghanistan)*

# Notes

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