REVIEW OF EXISTING PRACTICES TO ENSURE PARTICIPATION OF DISASTER-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS

Aguaconsult Ltd.

Final Report
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The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the authors, which are not necessarily shared by the European Commission.

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Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACAP	Assessment Capacities Project
ACF	Action Against Hunger (Action Contre la Faim)
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AFDB	African Development Bank
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
AUSAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CAP	Community Action Plan
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBHA	Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
COPC	Co-Operative College
CBO	Community-based organization
CDA	Collaborative Learning Projects
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Haiti
CDRC	Community-Driven Recovery and Development Project
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMCs	Community Monitoring Committees
CSA	Conflict Sensitivity Approaches
CSC	Conflict Sensitive Consortium
DDG	Danish Demining Group

DEC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness ECHO
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ECB	Emergency Capacity Building project
ECHO	European Commission for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
EDF	European Development Fund
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
EU	European Union
EVIs	extremely vulnerable individuals
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreements
GBV	Gender-based violence
GHA	Greater Horn of Africa
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GTZ	now GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HoA	Horn of Africa
HRF	Humanitarian Response Funds
HRR	Humanitarian Response Review
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group

ICBT	Inclusive Community Based Targeting
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP(s)	internally displaced person (people)
IDRL	International Disaster Response Law
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IGSSS	Indo-Global Social Service Society
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LNGO	Local Non-governmental Organisation
LRRD	Linking relief to rehabilitation and development
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fishery
MAG	Mines Advisory Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning
MIRA	Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NATF	Needs Assessment Task Force
NCM	National Consultative Meeting
NIHA	Neutral Impartial Humanitarian Action
NGO	non-governmental organization
NORAD	The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NURO	Northern Uganda Relief Operation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
ODI/HPN	Overseas Development Institute/Humanitarian Practice Network

OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
OECD	Organisation for the Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
PFIM	People First Impact Method
PIA	Participatory Impact Assessment
PIA	Personal Information Agent
PLWA	People living with AIDS and HIV
PRA	Participatory Rural Assessment
PSNs	persons with special needs
PWD	persons with disabilities
RAISE	Reproductive Health Access, Information and Services in Emergencies
RCM	Regional Consultative Meeting
RDD	Regional Drought Decision
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
RSPN	Rural Support Programme Network
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely
SMS	Short Message Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TA	Technical Assistant
TCG	Tripartite Core Group
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

UNRSID   United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

VCA   Vulnerability Capability Assessment

VfM   Value for Money

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

VOICE   Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

WASH   water, sanitation and hygiene

WFP   World Food Programme

WHO   World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

1.   This review provides an overview of the most relevant policy, practice, literature and research concerning the participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian action. It identifies key case studies and examples of best practice from a range of organisations and scenarios. The review also includes an analysis of donor funding policies and approaches, as well as the impact of 'lessons learnt' on future actions. This includes the way 'participation' is formulated in terms of policy and how it is carried out in practice in multiple contexts. The report provides a set of conclusions and specific recommendations for DG ECHO with the aim of further integration of participatory approaches in future humanitarian interventions. These recommendations are made in anticipation of a full scale review to be carried out by DG ECHO at a future date.

Scope and methodology

2.   This review process started by developing a mapping and overview of the most relevant literature on participation produced in recent years. This has been sourced from the main agents and actors in the humanitarian sector, including major bi-lateral and multilateral donors, UN Agencies and Departments, international organisations and NGOs, academic institutions and research groups. Over 200 of these documents are included in a structured database intended as a resource for DG ECHO staff and searchable by theme and region **(Annex 1).** Documents from the database are also referenced throughout the review and included in the bibliography **(Annex 2).** An online "e-survey" then followed and was circulated through major humanitarian organisations and networks to gain insight from professionals and practitioners working in the humanitarian sector all over the world. In addition DG ECHO technical assistants were emailed directly to take part in the e-survey, as well as individual contacts of the consultants undertaking this study. A full breakdown of the e-survey results and a copy of the original questionnaire are available at **Annex 3.**

3.   The review team then visited Geneva, Delhi and Nairobi to ground-truth initial findings and hypotheses emerging from the literature review and e-survey, with key stakeholders who are directly interfacing with field operations. The review team interviewed over 100 representatives from UN agencies and the International Organisation of Migration, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, as well as inter-agency organisations such as the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP International). A range of levels was included in interviews to enable a broad spread of opinion and experience, providing the opportunity to examine more closely how humanitarian policy filters down to implementing partners and how, in turn, lesson learning from participation in the field can inform policy makers. A full list of interviewees is included at **Annex 4.**

Working definitions

4.   Most agencies are in the process of exploring their understanding of participation, and its application in practice; therefore an agreed standard definition remains elusive. For the purposes of this review, a simple definition has been used,: "***Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every***

opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them While this definition is appropriate for strictly humanitarian programming, it should also be acknowledged that many humanitarian actors believe that the most effective participation takes place during a humanitarian situation where a previous relationship has been developed through a DRR or development programme, or by partnering with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or Local NGOs (LNGOs) who already have this relationship.

Findings

5. Current practice is changing to reflect the growth of policy to support participation. This is most evident in a number of key areas: a move from criteria-based to community-based selection; increased effort in the provision of information to communities; an upsurge in new tools and practice driven by the accountability agenda and use of feedback mechanisms; and the growing involvement of aid recipients in monitoring and evaluation. Many of these practices are magnified by two key developments; firstly the rapid donor-supported growth in cash based programming and secondly the recent technological developments used in mass communications and beneficiary voice initiatives.

6. There is increasing recognition of the need to consider participation of affected communities across the humanitarian community. This is evident in the vast body of policy, standards and guidelines that have been developed. There appear to be two key drivers in this recent growth: the rights based (or moral) reasons for doing so and operational or practical reasons (i.e. gets the job done better). However, there is much more divergence both in the literature and in practice on how to actually undertake participation, probably due to the lack of a clearly agreed definition. In practice, many 'models' of participation comprise of a progression which starts with the simple provision of information to the affected community and moves through a series of steps towards greater ownership of the project or intervention by the community.

7. This review identified a number of key factors that condition and influence participation. The most commonly cited and influential of these is context, which includes factors such as scale and nature of the crisis. However, systemic issues including agency capacity; the increasing use of sub-contracting implementation to Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and local NGOs, and aspects of the current humanitarian architecture including coordination, were all found to play a part, as were phases and timing, stakeholder analysis, and to a lesser extent, the nature of specific sectors. Most national and international humanitarian response mechanisms have been developed to meet a need for sudden onset, time-limited interventions, and this includes humanitarian funding mechanisms and cycles. However, literature and practice illustrate that in reality, only about one third of current humanitarian interventions are in fact the sudden onset situations for which the international system is orientated. At least 70% of humanitarian action takes place in response to complex or protracted emergencies, which require strategic interventions supported by much longer funding horizons than the existing short term funding cycles are able to provide.

8. Evidence showing the benefits of participation in humanitarian response is growing. Examples from literature and interviews highlight some key areas such as greater efficiency within

programming; better linkages to LRRD and DRR; better needs assessments through deeper contextual analysis; and improved security and access. Cost effectiveness and impact are harder to capture although a growing number of examples exist. However, there are a number of risks that must be negotiated as part of the process of promoting participation. These include manipulation of aid by community leaders; overcoming cultural exclusions of segments of society; managing expectations of the community; and balancing agency (or external) expertise with local knowledge. Certain conditions challenge the very notion of participation, the key ones being where humanitarian access is restricted (including programmes that are managed remotely); situations of overwhelming scale; tightly managed standards defined by clusters or sectors; and opportunity costs of the "upward" investment that implementing agencies must make to be part of the formal international system.

9.   This review has examined a number of approaches that appear to provide a solid base for encouraging participation, irrespective of the specific tools or methodologies used. These approaches have been presented as a set of pointers to be considered in the pursuit of good practice. However, these should not be considered as being either comprehensive or universally applicable, as only effective participation itself will reveal the very specific characteristics of each context. Analysis of evidence from documentation, the survey and interviews indicates that appropriate participation approaches begin with the premise that Do No Harm and its associated operational practices are important starting points. Analysis also suggests that the pointers below should be considered to some extent, on a sliding scale, increasingly included as the context allows; from sudden short term interventions to on-going, protracted or complex emergencies, up to and including LRRD and DRR interventions.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. There is almost unanimous opinion in humanitarian organisations that <u>properly implemented participation of disaster affected communities brings significant benefits.</u> These include addressing issues of Do No Harm, protection, human rights, inclusion, equity, dignity and the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian programmes. Participation also supports and provides natural links to DRR and LRRD in many contexts. <u>There are however, a number of potential risks which need to be considered</u>, including those associated with context analysis, the traditions and customs of leadership, working at scale and managing flexibility and expectations.

Conclusions	Recommendations
POLICY C.1 Humanitarian donors are increasingly supporting participatory approaches. C.2 Major donors such as OFDA, DG ECHO and DFID all demonstrate clear policy links between humanitarian intervention, DRR programming, and accountability to beneficiaries, which frequently refer to participation as part of the means to	**POLICY** R.1 DG ECHO should agree the following institutional definition of participation; *"Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes*

achieve these objectives.

C.3   The importance of participation has been highlighted going back even as far as the mid-1980s, but the prioritisation of dialogue from the start still remains elusive or at best "patchy" in much of today's humanitarian work. (R2)

C.4   Defining what an organisation means by participation is not necessarily straightforward. For the purposes of this review, a simplified definition is suggested: *"Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them." (R1)*

C.5   Despite policy level support for participation, systemic issues actively mitigate against it. (R2)

C.6   This "policy-practice gap" increasingly pushes risk and responsibility for promoting participation downwards through the system. (R7)

C.7   Without more effective means to ensure policy is informed by practice, and that practitioners are better aware of policy, the risk is that participation becomes reduced to a box-ticking exercise, to demonstrate in reports that "participation has been done." (R11)

OPERATIONAL

C.8   There are many factors which affect the opportunities for participation, and the benefits it can have. But context overrides all other factors.

C.9   In principle, and context allowing, participation of affected communities is appropriate throughout the project cycle, and across most protection and assistance activities. (R4)

C.10 The available technical resources have value, but the more important organisational challenge is to effectively embrace an institutional approach to

that affect them"

R.2   DG ECHO should promote a policy of encouraging participation in its humanitarian work with other major stakeholders through advocacy in donor groups such as GHD and humanitarian agency donor support groups.

R.3   DG ECHO should ensure its programme documentation embraces the importance of engaging the affected population in dialogue at all levels, as appropriate to the context. This would include; FPA's, the Single Form; funding guidelines; documentation covering financing decisions; existing policies.

R.4   DG ECHO should place greater significance on its monitoring guidelines and ToR for reviews and evaluations to include further perspectives of beneficiaries and the wider affected population where at all possible and should encourage RTEs as a way of maximising the feedback from the beneficiary voice and affected population

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OPERATIONAL

R.5   DG ECHO should continue to develop the already growing synergy and coherence between its funding instruments (DIPECHO/ECHO/RDD) for stronger more predictable humanitarian responses which encourage participatory approaches. The existing use of DIPECHO or other preparedness and resilience decisions such as the RDD in areas of repeated humanitarian interventions is a fundamental strength that could be further exploited across other regions.

R.6   To achieve this DG ECHO should build on its existing experience and good practice developed out of previous preparedness work to maximise its effectiveness across the response cycle. For example:

- By ensuring that the beneficiary perspective is systematically included in ALL lesson learning exercises and workshops; and post crisis evaluations.

participation. (R7)

C.11 Taking sector or cluster approaches to participation is not particularly helpful unless very well timed and coordinated

C.12 The cross cutting areas of Gender and Protection are significant however. (R4, R7)

C.13 Cash-based responses, new types of information technology and increasing synergy between humanitarian interventions and DRR/LRRD work will all naturally tend to encourage participation with affected populations in the future.

C.14 This increased flexibility in beneficiary choice, and availability of rapid feed-back is likely to improve "downward" accountability to affected communities.

C.15 Participation can enable stronger communities and encourages advocacy to the concerned authorities and natural LRRD approaches to address longer term root causes than humanitarian response. (R5, R6)

C.16 One of the most significant factors determining the level of participation in a context is that of an agency having a pre-existing relationship with the affected community either through a DRR project or by partnering with CBOs or LNGOs who already have this relationship . (R6)

C.17 Human resources play a critical role in the approach to participation; and yet there are limited guidelines in the literature. The increasing number of "remote management" humanitarian programmes also places new demands and requirements on staff at field level. (R10)

DG ECHO
C.18 DG ECHO programme documentation and feedback from TAs and other interlocutors demonstrates a positive and growing synergy between humanitarian programming and DIPECHO and Regional Drought Decision (RDD) programmes.

(such as in the DIPECHO model of the NCM/RCM)

- Ensuring partner consistency in approach to participation across interventions at the planning and design stage and throughout the intervention and have regular meetings of implementing partners.

R.7   DG ECHO should encourage its partners to consider the affected population throughout the 'continuum,' of good practice as far as is appropriate with the nature of the context and type of intervention

- Do No Harm
- Provision of Information
- Getting it right from the start
- Community consultation
- Community mobilisation
- Selection of beneficiaries
- Maintain dialogue
- Use standards flexibly
- Monitoring learning and evaluation
- LRRD and DRR

R.8   DG ECHO should encourage partners to adopt an iterative approach to developing log frames in the Single Form together with humanitarian agencies. This could be accepting an initial log frame which can be refined on the basis of participatory information, or allowing the development of the log frame over a longer time frame together with the DG ECHO TA. This will enable a better reflection of grass root priorities.

R.9   DG ECHO should challenge and encourage its partners working in complex on-going emergencies to become more creative in their project conception. For example, taking a longer term strategic approach (five year plan) within which DG ECHO and other donor funding can be fitted.

R.10 DG ECHO should systematically highlight the strategic importance of human resources in ensuring appropriate participative approaches on

(R3, R5, R6)

C.19 DIPECHO programmes and the RDD demonstrate considerable good practice in participation of affected populations, although the scale of DIPECHO programmes is often smaller than DG ECHO humanitarian interventions. (R3, R5, R6)

C.20 Participation requires a degree of flexibility between agency and affected population and between agency and donor, which DG ECHO demonstrates in its relationships between TAs and implementing partners. Bureaucratic requirements can generally be overcome by these positive relationships. (R3, R4, R8, R12)

C.21 DG ECHO Primary Emergency Decisions (1 to 3 months grants) and Emergency Decisions (6 month grants) might be expected to include participatory approaches, but the international humanitarian system encourages "traditional" supply-driven responses. (R6, R7, R8, R9)

C.22 DG ECHO Ad hoc or World Wide decisions for funding protracted complex emergencies also largely use the same 'rule set' as above; even if an agency receives consecutive funding for the same programme for several years. Repeated short funding/planning cycles do not encourage innovation or creativity in what could be longer term more participative relationships. (R9)

C.23 DG ECHO programmes are not strongly orientated towards supporting the development of Human Resources in ensuring good practice in participation, or in capacity building of partner organisations and "downward" training to field level. (R10, R11, R12)

C.24 DG ECHO has good examples of where it has funded needs assessments ahead of predictable crises. (R9)

C.25 DG ECHO support to the WASH cluster to ensure a wider participation and sharing of responsibilities across all WASH partner agencies is

the ground to implementing partners. Issues include: ensuring continuity of staff; reinforcing the importance of attitude and relationships between agency and affected populations, and reinforcing the importance of dignity and accountability to all members of affected populations whether they are direct beneficiaries or not.

R.11 DG ECHO should encourage a genuine commitment from partners to a grass roots participatory approach. DG ECHO should ensure that it allows for adequate training and capacity building budgets for all agencies working through local partners. To reinforce this DG ECHO should provide specific funding which is allocated to ensure adequate training and capacity building of local partners to ensure predictable, high quality work at field level and genuine capacity to engage in appropriate participatory approaches.

R.12 DG ECHO should continue to use the TAs and their frequent field visits to maximise flexibility within partner agreements in the best interests of the affected populations; and to monitor and encourage general good practice including that provided by appropriate participatory approaches.

R.13 DG ECHO should encourage implementing partners to fully embrace grassroots participation as an approach to all humanitarian interventions. This could be done through encouraging:

- Human resource departments to value people skills alongside technical skills.
- Partnering with CBOs and LNGOs where appropriate
- Additional training for local staff and CBOs or LNGOs.

appreciated and meets a genuine need.	

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

1.   The importance of the participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian operations is recognised by a number of major reference texts in the humanitarian sector. Various motivations and objectives of taking a participatory approach are enumerated within that body of literature, as well as among humanitarian practitioners in the field.

2.   The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid highlights the importance of participation of disaster-affected communities, stating that: *"All affected people should be treated as dignified, capable human beings, rather than as helpless objects. The way aid is provided may be as important as the aid itself. Affected populations should participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Participation is both a universal right and good management practice."*[1]

3.   This review of best practice has been undertaken in order to increase the understanding of existing (and past) practices regarding participation of disaster-affected communities in humanitarian aid. It forms part of the ongoing review of participation as envisaged and addressed in the Action Plan for the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Action 25 foresees a *"preliminary review of existing practices to ensure participation of disaster-affected communities in Humanitarian Aid operation, leading to a more detailed joint evaluation of the participation of affected populations in EU Humanitarian Aid programmes."*[2]

4.   The review was commissioned in October 2011 and a briefing meeting held in Brussels on 22nd November 2011. There the scope of the review was further defined and interviews scheduled with current DG ECHO staff in Delhi, India; and Nairobi, Kenya; with third party interviews undertaken in Geneva, Switzerland, during February and early March 2012.   A workshop was facilitated on 27th March 2012 where the preliminary findings of this review were presented to DG ECHO Commission staff and steering group representatives.

5.   The review team is being fielded and managed by **Aguaconsult**, a UK based consulting firm with extensive experience in carrying out similar reviews of humanitarian, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and policy development.

1.2 Purpose of the review

6.   The review aims to provide a review of the most relevant literature concerning community participation in humanitarian operations and identify key case studies and examples of best practice

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[1] Annex: 'Principles, Standards And Evaluation Criteria For Humanitarian Aid' *The European Consensus On Humanitarian Aid* (2008/C 25/01)

[2] Commission Staff Working Paper *European Consensus On Humanitarian Aid – Action Plan* (29.5.2008) Sec(2008)1991

from a range of institutions and scenarios. It includes an analysis of donor funding policies and approaches as well as the impact of 'lessons learnt' on future actions, including the way 'participation' is formulated in policy and carried out in practice in multiple contexts.

7.   The review will then put forward recommendations for DG ECHO with the aim of facilitating the further integration of participatory approaches in future humanitarian interventions, in anticipation of a full scale joint evaluation to be carried out at a later date[3].

1.3 Scope of the review

8.   As agreed with DG ECHO the scope of this review focuses largely on material published within the last five years and includes input from institutions regarded as the 'main players' in the humanitarian sector, identified as such both in terms of the quality and the quantity of their output. These include, but are not limited to; major bi-lateral and multilateral donors, such as **DFID** (*Department For International Development)*, **USAID** (*United States Agency for International Development)*, and **DG ECHO** itself, **UN** agencies and departments such as **UNHCR** *(The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees)* and **OCHA** *(Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)* international organisations such as the **ICRC** (*International Committee of the Red Cross*) and **IOM** *(International Organisation for Migration),* International NGOs such as **Oxfam, Tearfund** and **ActionAid**, national NGOs in India, academic institutions and research groups and multiagency collaborations, such as the **IAWG** *(The Interagency Working Group),* **ALNAP** (*Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance* in Humanitarian Action), **HAP** (*Humanitarian Accountability Partnership),* **Groupe URD**, **Quality Compas**, **TEC** (Tsunami Evaluation Commission), **SPHERE** and **ODI HPN** (Overseas Development Institute/ Humanitarian Practice Network).

9.   Material from earlier periods is included where these have been deemed to be seminal works and relevant in order to present what is regarded as *'good practice'* across as broad a range of operational contexts and scenarios as possible, as defined by the terms of the review. In general, the focus of the review is on contemporary practice and policy.

10. In addition this review includes a structured database of over 200 documents with direct relation to participation, intended as a resource for DG ECHO staff, searchable by theme and region. For a full breakdown of the data as presented in the database, please see Annex 1.

11. The team thanks all those who took part in the review and contributed to the interviews, e-survey and workshop; without their input the report's understanding of current practice presented below would be considerably less detailed.

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[3] pp. 4 Terms of Reference - ECHO/ADM/BUD/2011

1.4 Methodology

Data mapping

12. The growth in accountability initiatives in the sector over the past decade has led to an increasing number of resources regarding humanitarian interventions and beneficiary interaction being made publicly available over the internet.

13. The research material analysed was first sourced, collated and prioritized for detailed review and a log of the material's type, origin and region was kept in order to record its distribution globally and by institution. Over-reliance or scrutiny of documents or publications of one organization over another was therefore avoided as far as possible. Individuals across the humanitarian community were also contacted for their own personal contributions and several papers were made available to the team bilaterally and on a confidential basis. An online survey also conducted as part of this review (see below) yielded further documentary evidence from third party contributors.

14. The literature reviewed below and the database does not include material in languages other than English. While this represents a potential lacuna in the map of policy and practice presented in the review, and although a multilingual review of data would have been ideal, this task lay outside the purview of the assignment. Globally, the quality and breadth of material available in English is high and this omission is not believed to substantially detract from the validity of the review findings. Material used in direct relation to findings of the report is referenced throughout and included in the bibliography in Annex 2.

E-Survey

15. The e-survey was devised and produced to gain insight from professionals and practitioners working in the humanitarian sector around issues of participation in disaster-affected communities. Due to limitations of time and scope, this review did not consult the beneficiaries of humanitarian aid operations directly. The e-survey was undertaken prior to interviews carried out with humanitarian staff based in Nairobi and Delhi to help inform those interviews and to ensure that the findings of the survey could be verified and investigated in further detail.

16. The following organisations sent out the e-survey link through newsletters or specific emails to those on their mailing lists:
ALNAP (*Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance* in Humanitarian Action)
ODI HPN *(Humanitarian Practice Network)*
DFID Humanitarian Network
VOICE *(Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies)*
CSC *(Conflict Sensitive Consortium)*
CBHA *(Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies)*

Feinstein International Center, Tufts University

17. In total, 180 responses are included in the analysis. Of these, 130 respondents answered all of the questions (72%) and the remaining 50 answered a varying number. The survey was anonymous to complete, though gathered information on the professional role of the respondent and whether they were predominantly desk or field based. Options were given to rank a number of statements or approaches relating to participatory practices and issues, or to pick top choices from among a number of possibilities. Where a respondent had experience working with DG ECHO over the past five years, they were asked to give their views on which practices they felt would most effectively facilitate participation and what could be done in future to further encourage it.

18. DG ECHO Technical Assistants themselves were emailed directly and petitioned to take part in the e-survey, as well as individual contacts of the consultants undertaking this study. A full breakdown of the e-survey results and a copy of the original questionnaire are available in Annex 3. The e-survey provided important insights into 'current thinking and practice' of practitioners outside the context of written reports and evaluations, across multiple scenarios, which allowed the authors of the report to draw on valuable sector experience which would otherwise not be available.

1.5 Interviews and field visits

19. The main aim of the visits to Geneva, Delhi and Nairobi was to ground-truth initial findings and hypotheses emerging from the literature review and e-survey with key stakeholders who are directly interfacing with field operations. The review team interviewed over 100 representatives from UN agencies and the International Organisation of Migration the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, as well as inter-agency organisations such as the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP International). A wide range of levels was included in interviews to enable a broad spread of opinion and experience. Therefore senior figures such as the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Head of UNHCR Somalia and ICRC Heads of Delegation for India and Kenya Regional Delegation, and NGO country/regional office heads were interviewed, as well as a large number of interlocutors at head of operation and programme head level who had everyday field experience as well as a good overview of policy issues.

20. In India the review team also met with Sphere India, and a number of National NGOs who act as implementing partners to international NGOs. This provided the opportunity to examine more closely how humanitarian policy filters down to implementing partners and how, in turn, lesson learning from participation in the field can inform policy makers.

21. After initial discussions in Brussels over the appropriateness of field visits, the review team confirm that these visits were invaluable in the research for this report. Without exception, each and every meeting highlighted the range of complexities that agencies face in considering participation in programme implementation stage. A genuine commitment to the principle of participation was an overwhelming factor revealed in these meetings, as was a great openness to discuss why participation can be challenging in practice. A full list of interviewees is included at Annex 4.

Constraints to the review

22. The nature and necessary time constraints to this review did not enable the opportunity to consult with affected populations or beneficiaries themselves. This consequently required much use of secondary data and interviews with practitioners rather than affected populations. There is a wide range of definitions of participation and so a number of different perspectives are considered, which makes some areas of quantifiable comparison challenging, as in the words of one interlocutor, one is "*comparing apples with bananas*".

23. Many mainstreamed approaches in humanitarian work in fact encourage participation through the good practice that they demonstrate and many general good practices such as Do No Harm, or DRR are champions of participation, but as this work is often not classified under the heading of "participation" in literature or institutional records, it can remain hidden from view when undertaking documentary research. During interviews and correspondence, the review team has been specifically guided to many otherwise overlooked good examples of participation. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that examples of participatory good practice remain classified under other titles in many organisations and bodies and not easily accessible to either researchers or practitioners.

1.6 Working definitions

Describing participation

24. Participation is described in a wide range of ways by different humanitarian agencies. Different perspectives partly derive from the reasons why an agency may take up participatory approaches. Some identify participation with a pre-defined target population of beneficiaries, such as children, the elderly, the disabled, or those affected by a disaster event. For others, such an approach to participation would be a contradiction in terms and from their perspective participation should include a comprehensive group of stakeholders. These may include; beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, host populations, different levels of community leadership, official or *de facto* authorities, weapons carriers and others.

25. Current definitions merge more traditional humanitarian approaches of community participation (often seen in terms of the human or physical assets, such as labour or local building materials and often referred to as '*sweat equity*', that a population may be able to provide) with longer term development-derived approaches. These range from broad rights-based approaches to equity and inclusion through to the application of well-established sets of tools such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) and different types of community mapping and action plans. Therefore, whilst most agencies are actively exploring their understanding of participation, a standard or common definition still remains elusive. This literature review and interviews revealed that at present a large body of opinion concentrates on exploring participation through the lens of beneficiary accountability, within which a great deal of the current focus is placed on communications initiatives and feedback mechanisms.

26. Participation can start with the simple provision of information to an affected population. But most interlocutors are adamant that there is little excuse for not establishing at least the start of a two-way dialogue with the affected population, no matter how urgent or extreme the situation. In this regard, participation involves removing the sense of "*otherness*". It means listening as well as talking, and taking the first steps together in resolving the humanitarian issues which emerge from this process. During the review, an ICRC delegate in India one interviewee explained that community representatives in Chhattisgarh had said *"Many agencies came to talk to us; but only you came to listen.*" He went on to emphasise the importance of participation in this agencies work: *"This is the only way to find out the unknowns and is more empowering to community than anything else we do".* This view corresponds to that of ALNAP; who state that *"Participation provides the basis for a dialogue with people affected by crisis, not only on what is needed but also how it might best be provided."* ALNAP (2003A)[4]

27. The importance of human relationships in participation is frequently referred to in literature and interviews. *"It means sitting on the ground with people, talking and listening, not going around with check lists…….A programme is participatory because it involves a negotiation of responsibilities between the (development) workshop, government and community representatives."* ALNAP (2003B)[5]. Therefore, by its very nature, participation implies some degree of loss of control away from the humanitarian agency and towards the affected population and other stakeholders. "*Participation is like a kaleidoscope, it changes colour and form depending on who is using it.*"[6].

28. The WASH Accountability Handbook[7] (2009, pp 6) points out that participation can either be achieved via face to face contact or through appropriate third parties: *"Effective participation means individuals have an adequate and equal opportunity to voice their concerns and to express their preferences. Participation can occur directly or through legitimate representatives."* During interviews, interlocutors explained that participation *"enables people tell you what they want, and you follow or challenge until you come to an agreement."* UNHCR in Kenya explained that in difficult contexts like Somalia, participation is often about *"reaching a consensus"*; others frequently refer to participation as *"sharing the risk"* and *"providing mediation"* or *"facilitation"* between donors, humanitarian agencies and community.

29. Participation is seen as important to *"encourage support"* and *"buy-in"* to the project or programme, and to strengthen *"ownership"* and *"sustainability".* At no point during this review did a single interlocutor suggest that participation is anything but a desirable and beneficial aim, provided that any contextual-related risks could be overcome. As Sherry Amstein (1969) observed *"Participation is a bit like eating spinach. In principle, nobody is against it because it is supposed to be good for the health."*[8]

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[4] ALNAP (2003A) *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action A Handbook for Practitioners.* London. ODI (AL004)

[5] ALNAP (2003B) *Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations, Country Monograph: The Case of Angola.* London: ODI (AL009)

[6] Philip White 1994, quoted in ALNAP 2003A pp 35

[7] Global WASH Cluster (2009) *WASH Accountability Resources. Ask, Listen, Communicate.* (HAP010)

[8] Sherry Amstein (1969) quoted from ALNAP 2003A pp 229

Defining participation

30. One of the clearest definitions of participation is provided in the ALNAP Participation Handbook: *"Participation is understood as the engagement of crisis-affected people in one of more phases of a humanitarian project or programme: assessment, design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation."* ALNAP (2003A, pp 20). Within this broad definition however, a number of different agencies focus on more precise areas, which reflect their organisational priorities. Participation can therefore also be defined as equating to *"inclusion",* as representing a first step to "*partnership*", or as a series of steps where the "*process*" is as important as the end result.

31. More rights based approaches also fall within the same broader definition, and ALNAP point out that *".....participation and consultation are related to the rights and responsibilities to make decisions about one's own life."* (ALNAP, 2003C, pp61)[9]. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid defines participation as being *"......both a universal right and good management practice."* More specifically, Save the Children Fund believes that child participation should be interpreted within the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child[10]

32. The question of legitimacy of representation is a critical theme in much of the policy and guidelines. If those who claim to represent disaster affected communities are in fact excluding certain groups, then by definition this is not participation. This issue is strongly emphasised in the Inter Agency Field Manual on reproductive health in humanitarian settings (IAWG 2010)[11]. The IAWG definition of participation goes further than the ALNAP one in requiring involvement of key stakeholders (not just representatives of "crisis-affected people") and in *every stage* (not just "one or more") of the programme cycle; *"Participation is the involvement of key stakeholders in all aspects of the programme cycle — assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Opportunities for involvement should be transparent, free of coercion and open to all. It is essential to assure the participation of all groups, including women, men and adolescents (both male and female). It may be necessary to seek out the active involvement of often-marginalized groups such as minorities, young people, widows and the disabled."* (ibid 2010, pp 11)

33. For the purposes of this review, a simplified definition is suggested, which draws on the IASC definition:

"**Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them**."

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[9] ALNAP (2003C) *Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations, Country Monograph: The Case of Angola.* London: ODI (AL009)

[10] SCF (2005) Practice Standards in Children's Participation. Save the Children UK. London

[11] Inter Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (2010) *Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings.* IAWG (IAWG001)

34. While this definition is appropriate for strictly humanitarian programming, it should also be acknowledged that many humanitarian actors believe that the most effective steps in participation should take place before a humanitarian situation develops (through work in building local capacities, in preparedness, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and building resilience), and extend after the situation has been resolved to reduce exposure to further risk.

2. Participation in humanitarian principles, policy, and standards

2.2 General principles, codes and standards

35.   The fundamental legal instruments which might apply to a disaster or conflict affected community include International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law. Elements of these instruments will be reflected to a greater or lesser extent in the relevant national laws of the affected country or territory, depending on which international conventions and treaties have been signed and ratified by the state or region in question. The notion of respecting "dignity" is made explicit in specific articles within these laws, as well as being implicit throughout their texts and interpretation. The importance of participation in enabling dignity to be respected emerges more clearly in the subsequent principles and standards which serve to guide primarily how humanitarian aims should be pursued, as distinct from what they are or should be.

36.   Therefore from the outset, reference to participation in terms of principles and standards predominantly refers to ensuring good practice in the *actual process*, or the way in which humanitarian work *should* be approached and conducted. Since The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, a wide range of international human rights instruments have also subsequently developed. These include reference to many areas of participation freedom to make choices and self-determination for individuals and communities alike. Closely related, but still distinct from Internal Humanitarian Law, the growth of rights based approaches, particularly in the NGO sector, has also had an influence on how participation is approached in both development and humanitarian work.

37.   The SPHERE Project[12] (2011) firmly bases its first standard *"Core standard 1. People Centred Humanitarian Response"* on the basis of ensuring dignity, by stating: *"People's capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of humanitarian response" (2011, pp 55).* The Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response programmes (Ref Code of Conduct) include at least three principles which refer to the importance of participation*: Principle 5.* refers to ensuring dignity*: "We shall respect culture and custom."* (2011, pp. 371) Subsequent principles consider participation in terms of local capacities and management of aid: *Principle 6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities. "Principle 7: Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid."* (2011, pp. 371)

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[12] The Sphere Project (2011) Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response. London: Practical Action Publishing

38. The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid[13] (2008) provides a particularly comprehensive point of reference, drawing together principles, practice and rights based approaches*: "All affected people should be treated as dignified, capable human beings, rather than as helpless objects. The way aid is provided may be as important as the aid itself. Affected populations should participate in the making of decisions that affect their lives. Participation is both a universal right and good management practice."*

39. More specifically, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative provides two distinct principles to ensure the active participation of affected communities as well as the commitment to reinforce the capacities of affected stakeholders to meet what it recognises as their own responsibilities: "*Principle 7. Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response." While "Principle 8. Strengthen the capacities of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring that governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian partners."*[14]

40. The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) considers participation as a '*Standard Principle*', a '*Standard Benchmark*' and as a '*Principle of Accountability*': They insist and maintain that *"The organisation listens to the people it aims to assist, incorporating their views and analysis in programme decisions."*[15] The Emergency Capacity Building project (ECB) "Good Enough Guide" (2007) also sees participation as a key benchmark, with the first section focusing on the need to *"Involve People at Every Stage"* with the following sections covering profiling vulnerabilities, identifying the changes that people want, and exploring the processes of two way information flow and feedback from affected communities.[16]

41. The "*Do No Harm/Local Capacities for Peace Project*"[17] (CDA - Collaborative Learning Projects) also supports approaches which heavily rely on participatory programming with the very specific aim to search out capacities for peace and connectors, within conflicting parties. At this juncture, the role of participation goes beyond promoting conflict sensitivity and good practice in humanitarian work, towards peace building and conflict analysis. In non-conflict or post-conflict environments, the value of longer term participation is similarly reflected in LRRD and DRR orientated approaches, ultimately closing the loop between pre-crisis intervention, including disaster mitigation, preparedness and resilience investments.

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[13] The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid - Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission (2008/C 25/01, 30.1.2008) (EC017)

[14] *GHD (2003) Principles and Good Practice Of Humanitarian Donorship.* Stockholm (GHD001)

[15] HAP (2010) *Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard Guide.* Geneva: HAP (HAP002)

[16] ECB (2007) *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: "The Good Enough Guide".* London: Oxfam (ECB001)

[17] www.cdainc.com/dnh/docs/DoNoHarmHandbook.pdf

2.3 Policies

Bi-lateral Donor Policies

42. Humanitarian donors are increasingly adopting the idea that performance should be judged at least in part on beneficiary views*.* This is reflected in the new humanitarian policies which many of the major donors have developed in the last two or three years. These by and large have provided the opportunity to embrace existing GHD guidance on participation. Almost without exception, major donors maintain responsibility for DRR within their humanitarian facilities, and this also encourages a growing linkage and synergy between humanitarian action and the types of participation already more intrinsic in longer term DRR programming. Major donors such as The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance(OFDA - USA), DG ECHO and DFID (Department for International Development – UK) all demonstrate clear policy links between humanitarian intervention, DRR programming, and accountability to beneficiaries, which frequently refer to participation as part of the means to achieve these objectives.

43. A number of donors are supporting an increasing diversity of initiatives that focus on different elements of participation. In interviews, examples referred to included: Support for community level advocacy in Burma (DFID); support to information and feedback work CDAC and Infoasaid (DFID), Danish Refugee Council (DRC) mobile phone beneficiary feedback project in Somalia (DFID), Capacity building for preparedness of Tearfund's local partners (OFDA); Capacity building in Global WASH Cluster which includes participation (DG ECHO); and pre-disaster and needs surveillance/contingency planning in Afghanistan (DG ECHO).

44. The Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AUSAID) Humanitarian Action Policy 2011[18] is a leading example in terms of clarity at policy level. It states that humanitarian assistance: "*requires the active participation of people affected by disaster in order to be effective*." (pp 49) The core policy outcome is one that "*meets the need and is accountable to affected populations*." Performance evaluation on any accountable and inclusive humanitarian action will be judged on "*detailed evaluations and external reviews of individual humanitarian responses that will include questions on the extent to which affected populations and vulnerable groups were involved in planning*." (pp. 58)

45. The Swedish International Development Agency's (SIDA) "*Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance 2011-2014*"[19] has as its 7th goal the increased participation of the affected population. "*To achieve this goal, support will be provided to efforts that aim to enhance the capacity of the affected population to demand accountability from local and national authorities and institutions as well as humanitarian organisations. Through agreements with partner organisations, SIDA will ensure in particular that the affected themselves – vulnerable women, men, young people, boys and girls – are, as far possible, involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the support they are expected to receive*." (2011, pp 10(16))

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[18] AUSAID (2011) Humanitarian Action Policy 2011 (AUS001)

[19] Strategy for humanitarian assistance provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) 2011 – 2014 (SID001)

46. While participation is implicit within a set of principles for some donors (for example the Government of Japan complies with principles of the GHD) grant reporting or operational guidelines show the further value donors place on participation. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), for example, explicitly state the value of participation in their "*Guidelines for emergency humanitarian assistance project proposals and reports*"[20] which *"…seeks to significantly involve targeted, affected populations in decision making relating to needs assessment, programme design and implementation. Special measures may be needed to gain the views and perspectives of minority groups, and of women and youth given that they are often excluded from decision making forums.*"[21] The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 2005 "*Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response*"[22] stresses the important role of local participation: "*Shelter needs should not be derived or assumed based on damage assessments alone, but also through interaction with affected populations. Therefore, timing, participation, and needs are critical elements of any intervention.*" (2005 pp III-93) The current USAID Policy Framework (2011-2015)[23] aims to *"build in sustainability from the start"* (pp IV) and *"develop best practices for evaluations to assess impact and effectiveness."(2011 pp iii)*. The Agency is changing the way it does business focussing "…relentlessly on achieving and measuring results." *(ibid pp iv)*

47. Other donors only explicitly mention participation of communities in the context of DRR. Japan, for instance, states that '*It also cooperates with developing countries for mainstreaming of disaster reduction in development plan and community-based disaster reduction efforts.*'[24] However, *JAPAN Human Security*, which is one of the principal pillars of Japanese foreign policy, means to primarily focus on individual people via efforts to build societies in which everyone can live with dignity, by protecting and empowering individuals and communities that are exposed to actual or potential threats.

48. Several donors have transparency charters dealing with upward accountability, such as Australia, Canada, and the UK's DFID. Their new Humanitarian Policy[25] looks to upward and downward accountability; under policy 5 point *19* they aim to*: "Make beneficiary accountability a core element of DFID's humanitarian work." (p.21.)* Further, DFID state that they will focus on improved evaluations that include the views of affected populations (p.21). USAID also places focus on improved evaluation via a new policy that states: "*Evaluation in USAID has two primary purposes: accountability to stakeholders and learning to improve effectiveness.*"[26]

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[20] CIDA (2006) *Guidelines for emergency humanitarian assistance project proposals and reports.* (CID001)

[21] CIDA (2006, pp 13) *Guidelines for emergency humanitarian assistance project proposals and reports.* (CID001)

[22] USAID (2005) Field Operations Guide For Disaster Assessment and Response (USA003)

[23] USAID (2011) *USAID Policy Framework 2011-2015* Washington: USAID (USA002)

[24] http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/emergency/pdfs/outline_hap.pdf

[25] DFID (2011) *Saving Lives, Preventing Suffering, Building Resilience: The UK Government's Humanitarian Policy* London: DFID pp. 16 (DFID001)

[26] USAID (2011) *USAID Policy Framework 2011-2015* Washington: USAID (USA002) pp 12

2.3.1 DG ECHO policy

49. Echoing the European Consensus, several Commission policies reflect the emphasis on human dignity and the involvement of communities. The Humanitarian Food Assistance Policy 2010[27] states that "*they will seek the involvement of beneficiary communities in identifying needs, and designing and implementing responses;*" (p.10). In the Funding Guidelines for Protection (2009)[28] the Legal Framework urges Humanitarian agencies to "*provide assistance in a manner that is consistent with human rights, including the right to participation…*" (p.11) and to "*ensure the participation of a broad cross section of the community in the design and monitoring of assistance projects…..*" (p.19)

50. DG ECHO's Single Form[29] expects a stakeholder analysis to be carried out and asks the contracted agency to "*describe to what extent and how the direct beneficiaries were involved in the design of the Action;*" (pp.2). Good examples exist in The *1st DIPECHO(Disaster Preparedness ECHO) Action Plan for the Pacific 2011*[30] which states that the intervention should "*successfully merge technical knowledge with local knowledge…..capitalises existing knowledge and capacities and maximising ownership and sustainability.*" (point 5). The *2010 Decision Document for the Horn of Africa (HOA)*[31] states that "*to succeed and remain sustainable, the interventions will have to be based on strong community participation, involve local and national institutions …..allow lessons learnt and good practices….to be replicated.*" (pp 9)

51. The 2012 Operational recommendations for proposals under the 2012 *Drought Risk Reduction Action Plan for the Horn of Africa Region*[32] stress that "*The implementation of a successful DP strategy is dependent upon the* **sustained investment of all stakeholders at multiple levels** *before, during and upon completion of the project cycle. The omission of which, be it of the direct involvement of target beneficiaries in the community or the participation of the local authorities or others,* **is most likely to negatively affect the attainment of the objectives of the project.**" (pp 8). This clarity and consistency is less evident in the non-DRR related funding documents and decisions and the review of policy found that there is currently no consistency among the specific funding guidelines currently used by DG ECHO.

52. In 2007, DG ECHO funded *An Evaluation of Humanitarian Aid By and For NGOs*[33] which recommended that agencies "*involve key stakeholders from within and outside your agency...*including "*community leaders, beneficiaries, other partners, donor representatives (e.g. DG ECHO Technical Advisors in the concerned country or region). Other stakeholders may be able to pose questions about*

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[27] EC (2010) *Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament Humanitarian Food Assistance {SEC(2010)374}* Brussels. (EC010)

[28] EC (2009) Humanitarian Protection DG ECHO's funding guideline {ECHO 0/1/ML D(2009)} (EC011)

[29] http://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/preparing_an_action/proposal_submission/single_form

[30] EC (2011) *Annex 1 to Humanitarian Implementation Plan Pacific {ECHO/DIP/BUD/2011/04000}* (EC015)

[31] EC (2010) COMMISSION DECISION of […] on the financing of humanitarian actions in the Greater Horn of Africa from the general budget of the European Union (ECHO/-HF/BUD/2010/01000) (EC012)

[32] EC (2011) Operational recommendations for proposals under the 2012 Drought Risk Reduction Action Plan For The Horn Of Africa Region (EC013)

[33] PROLOG (2010) *Evaluation Of Humanitarian Aid By And For NGOs: A guide with ideas to consider when designing your own evaluation activities.* Brussels: DG ECHO (EC014)

the appropriateness or effectiveness of some of your operations that you have not considered. It can also be a good idea to include potential critics of your project when planning an evaluation, to help ensure that their considerations are addressed by the evaluation." (pp 48)

53.   There is currently no consistency in DG ECHO evaluations for reporting on the level and type of participation of affected populations in DG ECHO reports. Its treatment ranges from evaluations that do not mention the affected population at all in terms of participation; to others which highlight the need for DG ECHO to give greater focus to this area. The 2009 evaluation of DG ECHO assistance to vulnerable groups affected by the crisis in the Central African Republic during the period 2007 – 2010 states[34]: *'protracted humanitarian crises such as CAR offer plenty of possibilities for the level of participation of communities in decision making on the support programme………the Evaluation is concerned about the limited compliance with principles of participation of IDPs, refugees and particularly host populations.'*(pp23-24). Others offer recommendations to DG ECHO: *'further medium term vision should be integrated into DG ECHO's actions in which needs are increasingly addressed in ways that prove more connected and involve further local participation and ownership.'*[35]

2.3.2 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) policy

54.   During the IASC Principals regular meeting in April 2011[36], the fundamental importance of accountability to affected populations was acknowledged and it was agreed to integrate accountability to affected populations into their individual agencies' statements of purpose as well as their policies. It was proposed that leaders of humanitarian organizations undertake the following actions in terms of their programming and strategic outlook:

Box 1: Key Accountability Commitments - *IASC Policy Actions*

Leadership/governance Demonstrate their commitment to accountability to affected populations by ensuring feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, programme proposals, monitoring and evaluations, recruitment, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.

Transparency Provide accessible and timely information to affected populations on organizational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices, and facilitate a dialogue between an organisation and its affected populations over information provision.

Feedback and complaints Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction.

Participation Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that

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[34] Transtec and SHER (2009) Evaluation of DG ECHO assistance to vulnerable groups affected by the crisis in the Central African Republic during the period 2007 – 2010. (EC004)

[35] DARA (2009) Evaluation of DG ECHO's Action In The Saharawi Refugee Camps, Tindouf, Algeria (2006-2008) (DA003)

[36] IASC (2011) *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reforms: 2011-2012* (IASC006)

> *affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalised and affected are represented and have influence.*
>
> ***Design, monitoring and evaluation*** *Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of programmes with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organisation on an ongoing basis and reporting on the results of the process.*

55. The IASC Principals requested that the '*Sub Group on Accountability to Affected Populations*' (part of the IASC Cluster Sub Working group and co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP), together with various bodies such as HAP, develop a proposal for inter-agency mechanisms to address the above issues. This work is underway, however, several senior interlocutors pointed out that there appears to be no functional linkages between this and the new Transformative Agenda of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). The Transformative Agenda focuses on inter agency response mechanisms with aims that include new information management methodology *"across the business cycles from needs assessment to impact evaluation."* Although not being opposed to including the views of affected communities, the Transformative Agenda and other IASC initiatives do take up a considerable amount of implementing partners time and may require additional staffing so as not to detract from capacity building at programme level. Nonetheless represents a considerable distraction for the leadership of many agencies, particularly UN agencies, away from building capacity at programme level and towards servicing the needs of the formal international humanitarian system*.*

2.4 The policy aims and benefits of participation

56. The policy aims of participation described in the previous section very closely reflect matters of principle. At the level of implementation however, the policy aims are closely related to broader benefits of participation.

2.4.1 Policy aims

57. The aims of participation vary widely across different humanitarian agencies, donors and practitioners and largely reflect principles discussed in the previous section.   Key policy areas include:

58. **Addressing rights; participation as a policy aim in itself**. For some agencies, such as Tearfund, Action Aid, World Vision, and Save the Children Fund, there is a strong identification with the community, often working through local partners who are from, or close to, the affected community. For these agencies participation is an organisational policy aim in itself; it is an end-state to be reached for in the pursuit of inclusion and respect of the rights of identified potentially vulnerable groups. Within this approach, a large body of the literature has historically highlighted the gender perspective in participation, often focusing specifically on the inclusion of women.

59. *"Distinctions in gender and generation also influence responses to participatory initiatives. DRC and GTZ[37] (find that participatory projects with women are more likely to be successful than projects with men. They argue that women generally work together more effectively, especially when organised into groups of different caste and socio-economic status, which men find difficult to deal with. Interestingly, quite a few female beneficiaries endorsed these positive views of women's participation. Several agencies noted that men and women tend to find different kinds of interventions effective, with men interested in "hardware" projects and women in "software."[38]*

60. However increasing attention is being paid to other groups today, including children, the elderly, the disabled, excluded castes, or minorities. From these specific rights-based policy aims, the actual operational practice invariably recognises that participation is also needed with at least part of the wider community in which these groups live. This may include other family members, carers, and often quite a wide range of stakeholders and duty-bearers who will also indirectly benefit from a rights-based approach to participation. A good example is provided by Save the Children Fund "*Every Child's Right to be heard*"[39] in box 2 below.

Box 2: Participation of Children - *Save the Children: "Every Child's Right to be Heard"*

Why should relief agencies promote the participation of children in emergencies?
- Children have a right to participate – the same rights apply in emergencies as in other times.
- Children have valuable capacities and are already making important contributions in all stages of emergency situations. Their participation improves the quality and reach of emergency work.
- Children know their communities and have access to some information and knowledge that adults do not have. They can provide valuable feedback on relief efforts utilising the strong connections and networks that exist between themselves.
- Children can protect, provide emotional support and care for other children, with whom they are often best placed to build rapport and trusting relationships. Children can find it easier than adults to understand other children.
- Children are willing to help and to participate and their enthusiasm and commitment provides an invaluable resource in the reconstruction process.
- Children have their own needs and concerns. Boys and girls of different ages have to be included in consultations to ensure that humanitarian agencies address their priorities.
- Participation brings benefits to children, families and communities. It contributes to children's education and development, and helps with the healing process. It helps children to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation. Not involving children undermines them by sending the message to the adult community and decision-makers that it is all right to exclude children from decision-making, information, consultations and contributing – that children have no role in the public sphere. Children who are informed about relief efforts are better able to survive and to protect themselves

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[37] Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

[38] ALNAP (2003D pp 71) Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations, Country Monograph: The Case of Sri Lanka (AL006)

[39] SCF (2011) Every child's right to be heard a resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment no.12 (SCF012)

- Children will be peace-builders, and makers and shapers of the new communities emerging post-conflict.

61. **Respecting dignity and the right to have a stake in decisions affecting ones future.** Participation is widely agreed to have significant importance in respecting dignity, addressing moral expectations, and the right of affected populations to have a stake in decisions which will affect them. Removing the sense of "*the other*" enables both agency and affected population to discuss on equal terms and with mutual respect how best to consider meeting challenges together. Preserving dignity through the establishment of dialogue and respectful relationships is a recurring theme across literature and examples of policy and good practice.

62. **Meeting obligations.** Participation is also frequently considered as being an institutional obligation in addition to being an opportunity. In this regard, participation also addresses:
- Obligations to respect and implement requirements outlined in Human Rights legislation;
- Obligations that agencies have made to donors;
- Obligations to standards which agencies have signed up to (HAP, SPHERE, Good Enough Guide, ICRC and NGO Code of Conduct); and
- Obligations to implement their own institutional policy.

2.4.2 Benefits of participation

63. There are multiple benefits associated with effective participation, many of which represent the practical delivery of fundamental policy aims. Because of the comprehensive nature of these benefits distinguishing those that reflect policy from those that represent good operational practice is challenging. However, some key areas of benefit are described below.

64. **Good operational practice and 'Do No Harm'.** Many agencies use participation as an effective way of working to cover a broad range of often overlapping policy aims. These include better contextual analysis and understanding of local issues, which can improve humanitarian access and operational security, and improve the quality of needs assessment and the efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention throughout the programme cycle. Protection concerns and issues of Do No Harm[40] become much clearer through participatory approaches, and opportunities to build longer term impact beyond the limits of the programme may also arise through exploring Local Capacities for Peace and links into LRRD (Linking Relief and Rehabilitation to Development) DRR and longer term building of resilience.

65. For example, for ICRC and DRC, participation is integrated in their broader approaches and provides a practical way of working. ICRC's "*Farming Through Conflict*"[41] (2007) is a policy/guide reflecting recognition of greater programme impact through participatory approaches, including training, personalised coaching programmes, technical advice and provision of productive inputs chosen by individual households' themselves. The value of this approach was strongly reiterated in

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[40] http://www.hapinternational.org/resources/category.aspx?catid=654

[41] ICRC (2007) *Farming Through Conflict* International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Economic Security Unit. Geneva

interviews with ICRC specialists during the review. Similarly examples of organically building links to LRRD and DRR objectives and building resilience through greater sustainability, longer term impact and stronger community ownership are provided by Cosgrave et al (2007), who carried out an Inter-agency real-time evaluation of the response to the February 2007 floods and cyclone in Mozambique[42]. This highlights the positive payback from participation in preparedness, including community preparedness.

66. ActionAid Myanmar Evaluation (Ferretti, S 2009)[43] concluded that "*consultation and participation were the foundation of its successful engagement*" (2009, pp 30) and that it was directly due to its "*very deep consultation processes with communities*" (2009, pp 45) that enabled AAM to define complex livelihood support strategies. International Rescue Committee (IRC) 2010 Afghanistan embedded a participatory study in their post emergency response to the floods "*in order to better understand the contexts of intervention and give voice to beneficiaries in assessing change.*"[44] All subsequent field findings were validated through the participation of villagers. Adherence to good practice also motivates agencies to consider participation as a way of ensuring they more effectively address a number of cross cutting issues (such as HIV/AIDS) as well as programmatic requirements (such as cost effectiveness).

67. **Cost effectiveness.** Putting a price tag on participation is extremely hard. Logic would suggest that there are considerable cost effectiveness gains for more appropriate programming, as well as less financial risk and greater impact per unit of investment. However, as much humanitarian programming is still judged by output and short term level indicators, providing the evidence of this remains challenging. However, some examples exist. Through good community involvement and motivation larger than expected contributions were received by Medair Afghanistan 2009 which enabled the project to expand considerably[45]

68. **Stronger monitoring and evaluation.** Participatory monitoring and evaluation have been recognised as key components of understanding impact, as well as an effective way of measuring it through beneficiary surveys. This has resulted in the development of many tools and techniques including Participatory Learning and Action. Hallam (1998, pp 25)[46] described the importance of using participatory approaches in surveys which use views of programme beneficiaries as one of the three key components in understanding impact. Fourteen years later, the second ALNAP "*State of the Humanitarian System*" report, due for release in the summer of 2012 has used mobile phone surveys with aid recipients in four current emergencies, taking the same approach but with new technology.

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[42] Cosgrave et al (2007) *Inter-agency real-time evaluation of the response to the February 2007 floods and cyclone in Mozambique*. DARA

[43] Ferretti, S (2009) Mid-term Evaluation Emergency Response Programme for ActionAid Myanmar. Action Aid International (AA007)

[44] IRC (2011 pp 9) Impacts of selected social transfers on food insecurity in post-emergency settings Contributions to polic y and programming from interventions in Nangarhar and Logar provinces, Afghanistan (IRC001)

[45] Beneficiary Accountability Update For 2008: Medair Afghanistan Based on emails received from Johan ten Hoeve, AFG Desk Officer, 10 February 2009

[46] Hallam, A. (1998). Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies

69. **Stronger advocacy.** Building stronger, more cohesive, more empowered communities enables them to be better able to advocate to the concerned authorities for their own needs and own rights to be addressed after the humanitarian agency programme has ended. For example, participation during humanitarian interventions enables affected communities to be more aware of minimum humanitarian standards and indicators, and provides a basis on which Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or community groupings can start advocate for themselves. For instance, the shocking levels of malnutrition across south Asia place hundreds of millions of people far below the emergency thresholds or minimum standards for nutrition outlined in SPHERE. The same is the case for minimum standards in water and sanitation. Not even meeting an emergency threshold for water or a minimum survival standard of nutrition in normal times is a very powerful baseline for communities to advocate for standards which daily challenge the most fundamental human right – the right to life. Focusing on ensuring the inclusion of all groups through participatory approaches can also result in single issue committees being formed that can play a powerful advocacy role, such as the Dalit Watch in India, which is concerned with the exclusion of some 200 million people. Humanitarian agencies increasingly want to ensure that community committees are representative (see p.38 Ensuring Representation). PLAN India explained during interviews that it has a policy of checking the constitution of all community committees that it works with.

70. **Contributing to security and safe humanitarian access.** The Overseas Development Institute Humanitarian Practice Network Conflict Sensitive Approaches (ODI HPN CSA) Network Paper[47] recorded that agencies in Pakistan who used effective participation experienced less conflict and tensions than agencies without it. In most models of good security practice, engaging with the affected population and other stakeholders is regarded as one of the most essential processes to analyse the security context effectively. Good security analyses should anyway reveal unmet humanitarian concerns as these are often pressure points for tension, unrest and insecurity themselves. Similarly, well implemented participatory needs assessments should quickly reveal security and access issues for both humanitarian agencies and affected populations.

71. **Keeping the intervention appropriate to an evolving situation.** The experience of the Feinstein Centre showed that where project participants are included in the impact assessment process, "*an opportunity is created to develop a learning partnership involving the donor, the implementing partner and the participating communities…by creating the space for dialogue, and the results can provide a basis for discussions on how to improve the relevance of existing programming and where to best allocate future resources*" (Catley et al 2008)[48] An evaluation of Oxfam India's response in 2009 to Cyclone Aila noted that community interactions were an important component of decision making and Oxfam India and DRC Somalia are examples of agencies which have introduced a much more rigorous and participatory MEL processes. In the case of DRC Somalia, this is now required as part of the "*due diligence*" required by DFID for funds going into Somalia.

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[47] HPN 2011 Applying Conflict Sensitivity in Emergency Response: Current practice and ways forward (Number 70 October 2011) ODI (HPN001)

[48] Catley, A. et al (2008) *Participatory Impact Assessment: A Guide for Practitioners.* Feinstein International Center. Tufts University (FIC001)

3. Key Factors and conditions Influencing participation

3.1. Context and type of response

72. Context is the single greatest determinant of how participatory approaches can be most effectively used. Looking in detail at some of the sets of most frequent contextual characteristics, the review has identified a number of contextual factors where participation is either positively or negatively influenced. These are as follows.

73. **Speed of response.** In literature the most commonly cited reason for not undertaking participatory approach is the need for urgency of response. In interviews, respondents almost universally disputed this constraint and refer instead to the interpretation of participation as a salient issue in many 'urgent' cases. The commonly held view on the ground is that there is hardly any realistic excuse in any context not to at least effectively communicate with an affected population and to start to establish a meaningful dialogue. This is by several definitions, is the start of active participation.

74. **Scale of response.** Many respondents pointed to the enormous difficulties of ensuring coherent participation in very large scale emergencies, such as the events in Pakistan and Haiti in 2010 where the scale of the situation was necessarily more of a challenge than the speed of response. In Pakistan some 20 million people were affected and in Haiti literally hundreds of NGOs took part in the response. In many cases however, the challenge is more a preoccupation of the formal international system trying to make sense of the magnitude of needs and to coordinate a coherent response, than it is for the individual implementing agencies on the ground participating with affected populations. Within their areas of operation humanitarian actors can still undertake participatory work, but how this fits into the surrounding horizons of wider unmet needs is of course very challenging. Even so, examples such as the Rwandese refugee exodus to Tanzania in 1994 demonstrate that context is still a more significant determining factor than scale. The presence of a largely intact and functioning civil administration right down to the smallest administrative unit (*chef de cellule*) provided an invaluable first step to a rapid, reasonably participative intervention at the scale of some 400,000 people crossing the border in a few days.

75. **Conflict and complex emergencies.** Respondents highlighted the potential risks and negative consequences which could arise from participation in these contexts unless great sensitivity is applied. Even entering into a dialogue with victims of conflict in some contexts could pose serious protection risks for both community members and agency staff. *These situations are probably the only instances where the potential implications of participation may outweigh the advantages at certain times*. The potential threat to the agency's perceived image of impartiality may make it advisable to have less (rather than more) staff or volunteers engaging at community level. However, in the long term, the focus will still remain on regaining opportunity for participation. In interviews, both the ICRC and IOM emphasised their long term commitment to the affected community. This may involve waiting twenty or more years before it is possible to safely re-establish a participative dialogue on issues such as the missing or returning migrant populations.

76. **Humanitarian Access.** The level of participation is greatly influenced by the ease (or not) of humanitarian access. In contexts such as South-Central Somalia, international agencies have to mainly operate by "*remote management*" and are only able to engage in participation through third party actors. Although much of the programming is necessarily participatory in terms of local decision making, this relies heavily on local leadership and systems of power in an insecure and complex political situation. Any guarantee of meaningful dialogue with the most vulnerable groups is very difficult to verify, illustrated by a recent internal UNHCR survey referred to in interviews, which revealed that only between 10% and 20% of selected beneficiaries were aware of the items they should be receiving. For the ICRC, representatives have made clear that "*proximity to the victim*" is the only way to be effective; and that situations that require remote control operations represent a deterioration of programme quality, a sign of desperation and a compromise against Neutral Impartial Humanitarian Action (NIHA).

77. In other restricted access situations where agencies are at least able to operate to some extent, participatory approaches need to be carefully negotiated and well understood by all stakeholders including, for instance, *de facto* authorities, weapons carriers and other groups. Although the starting point for participation may be far from ideal, it may be the only basis from which steps to improve access to enable dialogue and trust with affected population can be made. Norman (2012) writing in a Tearfund report[49] noted that *"INGOs have experienced reduced potential for community participation as a direct result of remote management. In one example, a project was implemented entirely by the community in two districts of Kabul. Local staff were not able to visit Personal Information Agents (PIAs) and were completely unable to interact with and engage the participation of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries in this programme were not able to advise or offer feedback on the plans for, progress, quality and impact of the project."* (pp. 61)

78. **Dispersed or displaced populations and disruption of traditional leadership.** Contexts such as non-displaced populations living in established and easily accessible rural villages, should provide better immediate opportunities for participation than a displaced population living with host families. Existing committees, groups and local leadership often become the starting point for engagement, though doing so is difficult if they are broken up across a spatially diverse and poorly connected affected population. However, engaging with newly emerging and perhaps opportunistic groups can cause resentment, tensions and local conflict, although there may be few immediate alternatives. In camp situations, the role of participation may also be overlooked by a preoccupation of humanitarian agencies with providing non-participatory assistance to meet international standards and guidelines (such as in health, shelter, camp management and WASH). In this situation however, failing to note the voice of the affected population risks ignoring many issues, including cultural norms, gender roles and protection concerns.

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[49] Norman (2012) Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments. London: Tearfund

79. **<u>Urban Settings.</u>** In urban settings the potential stakeholders and controlling group interests can often be very different to those in rural contexts or contexts of displaced populations. The urban poor comprise diverse, transient, dynamic populations which survive through their links with multiple complex networks that follow economic opportunities as they arise. Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) in India describe the specific importance of local communications to engage and assess needs in the constantly shifting, homeless, destitute population of "city makers". They combine this with higher level advocacy among different stakeholders to enable its own interventions and to ensure that other stakeholders, including the concerned authorities start to take longer term responsibility for mitigating at least the worst symptoms, if not the root causes of destitution. The ICRC predicts increasing urban challenges ahead and is already testing pilot programmes in cities such as Rio de Janeiro. This work seeks to explore the dynamics and territorial aspects of gangs in some urban contexts which are similar to the patterns seen in armed conflict in other parts of the world. This contrasts with more militia and ethnically based gang structures in other urban contexts which require different modalities of engagement.

80. **<u>Trauma and distress.</u>** Traumatic experiences can affect everyone in the community, be it conflict or a major shock or natural disaster, and need to be taken into account when engaging in participative processes. There is an argument that after very disturbing events, psycho-social style interventions may be required at a household and or community level before genuine participation is realistically possible. ICRC pointed out in interviews that humanitarian action needs to ensure that affected populations are in a position to take decisions that are both well-reasoned and which do not generate protection concerns which they may be unaware of, or not be in a position to fully analyse at the time. Conversely, specialists in psycho-social issues explained that taking the right approach to participatory processes achieves, by its very nature, many essential elements of psycho social interventions and can be of value from the outset. This is because participation helps people come to terms with their situation, to analyse and prioritise their next steps, and to move forward in a more predictable way with support provided. In most contexts, after the affected population has been able to take these steps, only a small residual minority will need clinical intervention to overcome issues of trauma.

81. **<u>Effectiveness and compliance of governance structure.</u>** A fundamental aspect of context is the strength, stability and effective mandate of different levels of government services with respect to an affected population. In most contexts (apart from occupying forces in armed conflict) the ultimate responsibility for the well-being of the affected population lies with the concerned authorities. A constructive participative relationship therefore is required between humanitarian actors and all levels of the concerned authorities to ensure an effective response. In practice, most humanitarian agencies have experienced extremes within this dynamic. This ranges from constructive relationships that facilitate humanitarian action and addressing needs equitably, through to restrictive attitudes that compound humanitarian problems or to there being an almost negligible official system to even engage with.

82. **Urgency and specificity of need.** Interlocutors agree that key life-saving interventions such as urban search and rescue, war surgery, therapeutic feeding and a number of health (and water) interventions are by their very nature so urgent, and so necessary, that they will often be undertaken in whatever way possible in the situation. Although not necessarily the case, some aspects of this type of work can in fact be surprisingly participatory, through for example, mobilising the population in many support functions to this technical work. However, while participation in this context would be positive, the realities mean that it cannot be regarded as a priority.

83. **Accepted discrimination/exclusion within existing cultural norms.** There is clearly a trade off between participation which focuses on traditional forms of community leadership and rights-based approaches that specifically target the most vulnerable. While traditional representation may systematically exclude the most vulnerable in many contexts[50], taking a rights based approach may also destabilise established local norms. Most interlocutors interviewed agree that the best starting point may with the traditional leadership to ensure sustainability and further aims then developed from there to progressively ensure greater inclusiveness. Within these extremes however, there may be cultural reasons why some groups prefer to be represented by others. There are also long-accepted traditions of re-distributing humanitarian assistance from the most vulnerable to the less vulnerable, or vice-versa, which need careful consideration when designing and implementing programmes. If disregarded, these cultural norms could generate local conflicts and even increase or transfer existing vulnerabilities

Box 3: Insight from ALNAP's Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study[51]

> *"At first humanitarian aid is based on solidarity. Adjacent villages and neighbourhoods readily welcome IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and share their food with them. Congolese NGOs in the neighbourhood respond (with limited means) by collecting donations (food, water and other items) from the population in general, and sometimes from businesses and other sources. Participation is effectively voluntary."*

84. **Perceptions of legitimacy and transparency.** Legitimacy and transparency are very basic requirements for participation as they define the issue of equity for the response at different scales. For instance, a highly accomplished participatory project will have questionable legitimacy if the surrounding villages have not been included in the process, which may lead to local tensions. This is equally true within a community if the targeting of the intervention was not the result of a participative process and was for example focused by design on a specific group such as women or children. The literature review failed to find guidance on addressing the balance between wide-scale "shallow" programming for an entire affected population and choosing to concentrate efforts on being fully participatory with a single affected village within the overall caseload. Ignoring, or leaving the

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[50] Gill, T (2006) Making things worse: How 'caste blindness' in Indian tsunami recovery exacerbates vulnerability Dalit Netwirk Netherlands (DNN)

[51] ALNAP (2003E, pp 69) Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations, Country Monograph: The Case of Democratic Republic of Congo (AL007)

needs of non-programme beneficiary populations to others, questions the fundamental legitimacy of an agency and in terms of the overall affected population, is far from being equitable or inclusive.

85. **The relevance/perceived relevance of the programme to the community.** Participatory approaches should result in programmes which are relevant to the affected population. However, particularly in the very first stages of response some humanitarian agencies prioritise their efforts on a single-issue, single sector or time bound interventions. Subsequent attempts at participation such as beneficiary feedback which comes after these decisions have been made will not necessarily make the programming seem more relevant. Similarly, in unstable or dynamic contexts the aspirations of the population (such as to return home from displacement as soon as possible) may not complement with an agency focus on for example improving conditions in the place of displacement. Any participation is therefore unlikely to be very enthusiastic regarding the programme aspirations of the agency in this regard. On the other hand is vital for the agency to understand better the perceptions of the population it is trying to engage and work with. As Chapman (2010) remarks in an Oxfam and Concern Worldwide funded study on cash transfers and gender dynamics: *"it is worrying to note that there was no sense of community participation in, ownership of, or even real understanding of the programme among either beneficiaries, or the village leadership that we interviewed….This led to a general sense of community disempowerment with regards to the intervention"* [52]

3.2. Actors and stakeholders in participation

86. **Defining Stakeholders.** Much of the literature concerning participation in guidelines, tools and project evaluations concentrates on a narrow range of actors and stakeholders. Literature from agencies which focus on a specific target group (SCF, Help Age, Plan, Handicap International) further explores participation with an even more clearly, or narrowly, defined set of stakeholders. In practice however, such target groups are invariable seen as an entry point to wider community participation. The most common approach is very much based on ensuring the inclusion of specific vulnerable groups within a wider participatory process which, at the same time, addresses the needs of these and other vulnerable people.

87. No single interlocutor described being limited to a single set of tools or guidelines for participation. It is clear from the literature and interviews that in practice most agencies gravitate towards an integrated VCA or PRA type of approach which encompasses a wide range of potential stakeholders as identified by the community itself. This finding equates with the findings from the e-survey (annex 3 and figure 2 below). This recorded 80% of respondents as being in favour of "*all potential beneficiaries*" being included in participation and between 30% and 80% support for involving groups as diverse as; local authorities and elected or non-elected community leaders through to local militias and occupying forces in addition. Furthermore, the interviews reveal the

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[52] Chapman, J (2010, pp 21) Zimbabwe Gender and Cash Transfer Study, Oxfam GB and Concern Worldwide (OXF015)

overwhelming importance of contextual issues in ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved, for reasons which range from ensuring equity of assistance to Do No Harm.

Figure 2. Who should participate? Which potential beneficiary groups should be the focus of participation in humanitarian action wherever possible? (Qu.16)
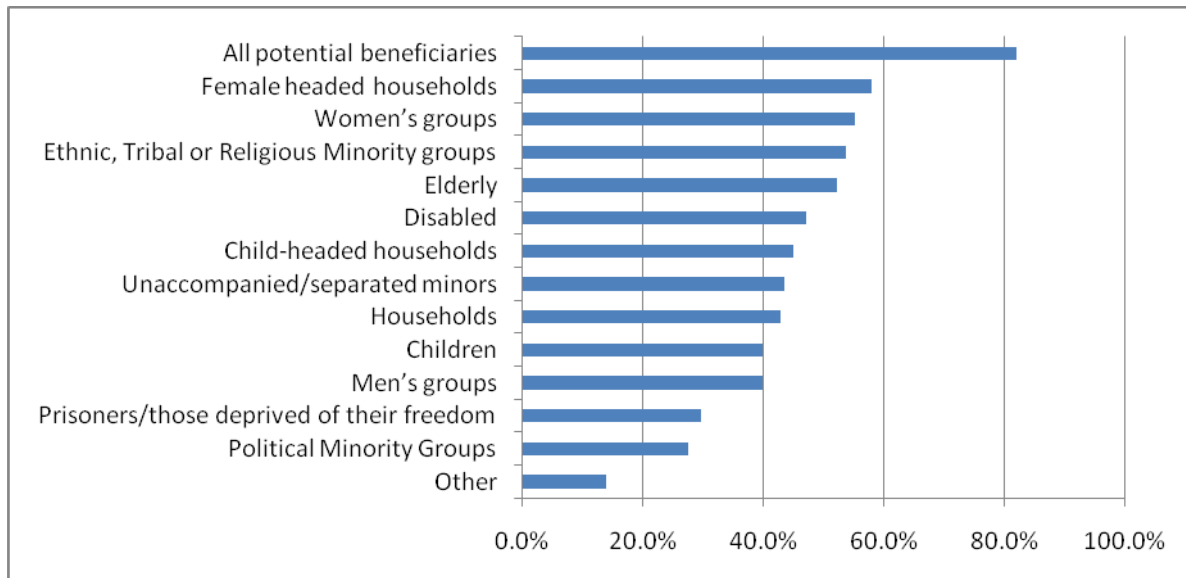
88.   **Balancing Competing Interests.** There are clear issues of protection and Do No Harm throughout this process, made all the more complex in a context where overt physical access by agencies is extremely limited, if possible at all. In the context of Somalia, interviewees from humanitarian agencies working directly on Somali programmes emphasized the crucial importance of "balancing" competing clan interests in any participatory process, as without this balance being achieved serious security implications could result. This process is closely linked to agreeing complex payments and "taxes" for areas including; transport and security, checkpoints, "gatekeepers", host communities and several other groups in order to establish the parameters in which a viable programme can be implemented. This takes place in a context where Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are actually seen as a "resource" which represents business opportunities associated with alleviating their plight. This wide range of stakeholders must reach a consensus before further participation regarding beneficiary selection and inputs regarding the type of most appropriate assistance

89.   **Ensuring Representation.** In less extreme contexts there are also constraints which require a broader inclusion of stakeholders to ensure more genuine participation from some groups. While there is broad agreement that (traditional) leadership or representation systems should be included in participatory approaches, this must be undertaken in the knowledge that in many contexts recognised leadership will systematically exclude the most vulnerable groups. Issues including gender, caste, disability, race, HIV status, religious group, affiliations, tribe, clan and others will require particular attention in order to ensure the inclusion of relevant sections of the population, hence the specific focus in much of the guidance and literature on these areas.

90. Humanitarian agencies arriving in a disaster situation may be unaware of particular aspects of exclusion as well as the scale of the issue faced by specific sectors of the population. But the acceptance of non-inclusion by society can be so widespread and so much a way of life, that in for instance the case of the Dalit Caste in South Asia, even with over 200,000 million people in their group, their needs and vulnerabilities can still be completely overlooked. The Dalit Network Tsunami evaluation revealed shocking figures of the almost comprehensive exclusion of the Dalits from much of the initial humanitarian response even though this was arguably largely unconscious on the part of implementing agencies[53]. The IFRC team in Nairobi explained the situation of the Twa people in the IDP crisis in Goma, which not only involved their total exclusion from humanitarian assistance but their active targeting from other groups to steal the scarce resources they had brought with them.

91. **Sensitive Stakeholder Relationships.** Situations of conflict are explored further in section 3.5 below. In these situations, the necessity to ensure both the implementation and perception of NIHA may seriously limit the possibility and wisdom of building overt relationships with some groups (including government authorities, military, *de facto* authorities or politically aligned community groups) which in other contexts would be valuable. Dialogue opportunities may be very restricted and even participation with affected households could trigger protection issues. For example, in south Sudan, the IFRC (International Federation of the Red Cross) report that the community will not speak without community leaders there, who themselves were revealed to manipulate humanitarian agencies. These situations are so context-specific, that careful judgement has to be made through any possible areas of dialogue with the concerned stakeholders who are initially more likely to be weapons carriers and those with political power than the affected civilian population themselves.

92. While immediately serious and difficult to overcome, these contexts will all change in time, and long-term programme focus on areas such as the missing and restoring family links may have to wait twenty or more years before it is possible to actively participate with stakeholders without doing harm or generating further protection issues.

93. **People deprived of their Freedom.** Very specific approaches to participation with regard to prisoners and detained populations are largely outside the scope of this review. However, in the case of the ICRC, they focus on attempting to positively influence the concerned authorities to recognise their obligations and to persuade them to undertake those obligations. If unwilling or unable to undertake these duties then the ICRC, as a Neutral Impartial Humanitarian Actor, may assist the concerned authorities in meeting the needs and obligations. This is a precise and specialist area of work under an International mandate, but is very participatory in its approach, although the restrictions faced may be profound.

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[53] Gill, T (2006) Making things worse: How 'caste blindness' in Indian tsunami recovery exacerbates vulnerability Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN)

3.3 Phases and timing of participation

94. The review of literature along with the views expressed during interviews demonstrated an almost universal opinion that participation should start at the very first stage of intervention and continue throughout the programme cycle. Interviewees explained that, while the first step should be the provision of information to the affected community, this should very quickly develop into a two way dialogue. This involves starting appropriate consultation with genuine community input into planning decisions, and is supported by the findings of the e-survey in which some 90% of respondents stated that community members should be consulted at the initial assessment stage (see figure 3)

Figure 3. If community members should only be consulted in certain stages of humanitarian intervention, please identify which stages (Qu.8)
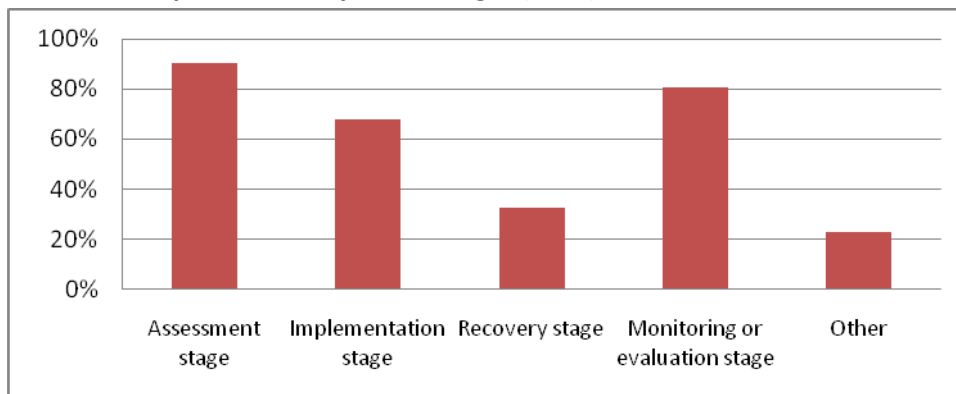
95. Furthermore, most interlocutors were adamant that even in extreme situations there is rarely a valid excuse for not entering into a genuine dialogue at an early stage and this assertion is backed up in much of the literature. Going back to 1985, the ICRC's Elementary Principles of Emergency Assistance[54] state in its section on Community Participation that: *"Mobilising the population enables it to express, at the outset, the requirements that it feels. Therefore it is imperative to speak to the people's representatives (traditional chiefs, administrators) to tailor assistance to their real needs and to involve them as soon as possible in developing the assistance work."* This should be caveated by the need to ensure that the leadership is representative or works towards representation.

96. In practice the most common reason given (in 61% of responses to the e-survey) for not engaging in participation is the urgency or timeframe of the intervention (see figure 4 below)

Figure 4. What, if any, are the reasons for not engaging with participatory approaches? (Qu.10)

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[54] Perrin, P.M. (1985) *Elementary Principles Of Emergency Assistance*. Icrc Geneva
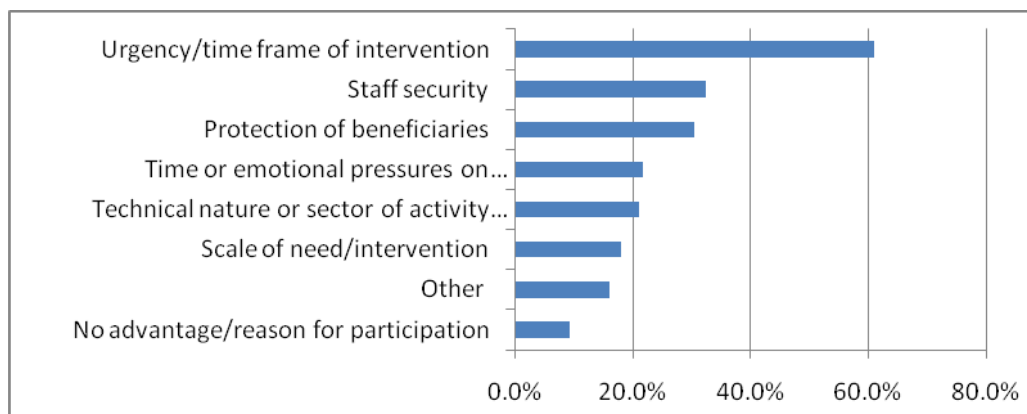
97. One interviewee remarked that*; "….you must ensure that however little is done at the beginning is done well, as you can never go back."* HPN (2011)[55] suggest that when problems arise in a programme; *"…..tensions can be traced back to the approaches and behaviours used by agencies at the beginning of the response, which have entrenched certain ways of working and undermined efforts to be more inclusive and participatory." (pp 12)*

98. Agencies may also find themselves inadvertently trapped in programmes that were based on needs assessment and design that were rushed, and may not have even gained adequate buy-in from the wider community at all. Some of the agencies interviewed admitted that some of this feeling of entrapment was their own doing. There could be a trade-off between the time required to make programme changes at the bureaucratic level and carrying on implementing the pre agreed programme, thereby "justifying" its value with output related indicators. The Listening Project Initial Findings[56] state that "*the systems and structures of international assistance are too focused on the quick and efficient delivery of goods and services and not enough on relationships.*" However, as one interviewee remarked "*the affected population are the first ones on the scene, and not to involve them from the beginning stages seems a remarkable oversight.*" This relates again to the importance of donor relations and pressure from donors to deliver.

99. There are good examples that combine speed with partnership to overcome these issues. In the Haiti response Christian Aid report that "pre-established relationships and experience allowed local organisations to work quickly and closely with people affected by the earthquake to target assistance where it was needed most, utilising local knowledge, resources and markets, and innovative approaches such as local trader-run food kitchens and cash distributions." (Building the Future of Humanitarian Aid; Local Capacity/Partnerships in Emergency Assistance; Katherine Nightingale 2012 p.25 Richard this is the doc we just sent you last week)

100. **DG ECHO Ad hoc or Global Decisions.** Funding for complex emergencies also largely uses the same 'rule set' as above; even if an agency receives consecutive funding for the same programme for

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[55] HPN 2011 Applying Conflict Sensitivity in Emergency Response: Current practice and ways forward Number 70 October 2011 ODI (HPN001)
[56] http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/lp_2page__initial_findings_from_the_listening_project_20100803_Pdf.pdf (LP001)

several years. In many of the on-going crisis such as those in Somalia, DRC, and Darfur, agencies and donors are locked into repeated 6 to 12 month cycles. These are undeniably humanitarian contexts that require humanitarian responses. Although the humanitarian needs persist, their nature changes over time Within short planning horizons it is hard to encourage innovation or creativity, and because of a "predictable unpredictability" this limits the potential value of what could be longer term participative relationships.

101. However, more recently some agencies, such as Tearfund, are starting to approach these situations with their own five year strategic plan of how they will respond. Within this strategy, enough flexibility is built in to react to likely short periods of crisis in the five year time frame, such as further displacement or movement of populations etc. In turn, these longer term strategies reflect longer term visions which can be encouraged at community level through more ownership and responsibility of communities in issues which will affect their own future. In the same way that the humanitarian agency can chose to assist the community in areas of priority it has identified itself, donors such as DG ECHO can select what it regards as priority areas from the five year agency strategic plan and support longer term strategic approaches with the same shorter term funding agreements.

102. However, in both the literature and during interviews, many agencies suggested that to ensure genuinely effective participation during the first phase of a response, the process should ideally start before a disaster event occurs. A shift in emphasis towards previously or ongoing community based DRR, preparedness or resilience efforts would therefore result in more effective participation at times of acute need, thus enabling more effective and inclusive response throughout. The e-survey reflected these opinions too, in that DRR and early recovery situations were regarded as the easiest contexts in which to undertake participatory approaches and to help close the loop to in turn promote hazard resistant development and more resilient communities. As the Oxfam Real Time Evaluation (RTE) 2009 South India flood response noted *"The presence of partners who already had a good rapport amongst the community helped in enhancing participation."*[57]

103. In conflict situations the phases of humanitarian action may be less clear than with a natural disaster and access, protection and security will be key factors affecting when and how participation may take place. Figure 17 of the e-survey shows that conflict was considered the hardest context in which to ensure adequate participation. It may take many years before a dialogue can be safely established with conflict affected communities, especially if addressing sensitive protection issues. Therefore in conflict situations and contexts with protection concerns, the exact phases in which realistic participation can be undertaken very much depends on careful analysis, conflict sensitive approaches and principles of Do No Harm. Relationships of trust and transparency many take many years to develop in protracted situations and a long term approach to participation may involve sensitive step by step approaches to eventually be able to resolve complex humanitarian issues.

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[57] Oak, A and Sen, T (2009, pp 22) *Evaluation Report of the Oxfam India Response to South India floods.* India: REdR India. (RED001)

Figure 5 – Which types of context/setting are hardest to ensure active participation? (Qu.14)
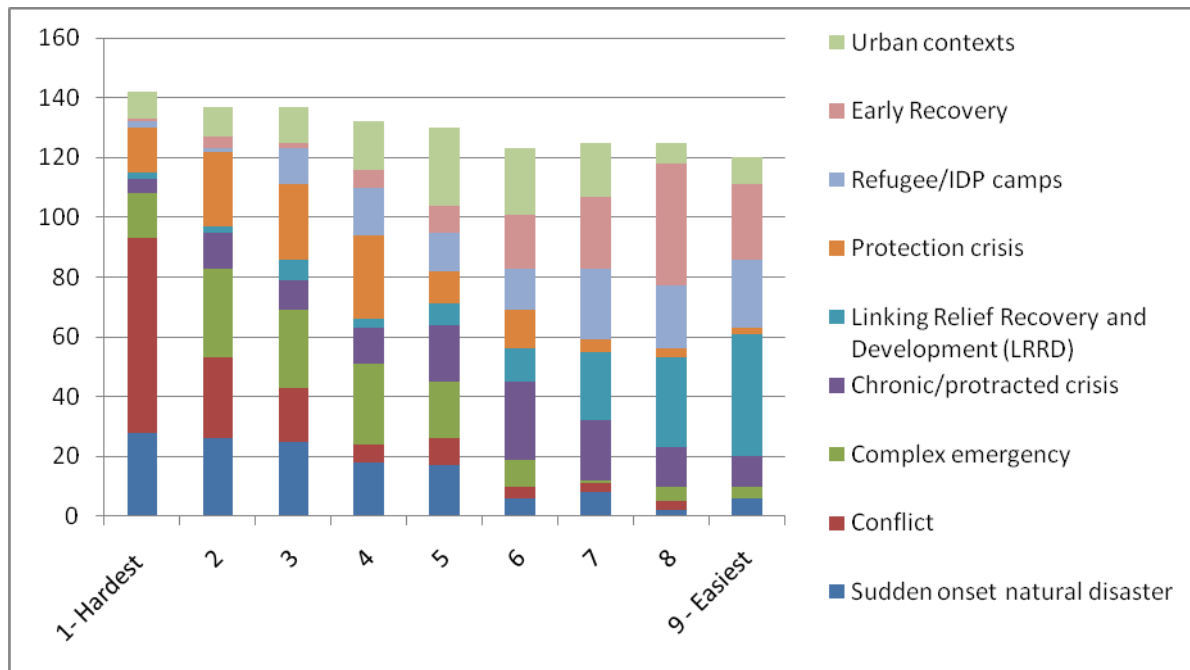
3.4 Systemic issues

104. **Humanitarian architecture.** Since 2005 the IASC Humanitarian Reform agenda has focussed on increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. Significant investments have been made to improve capacity for emergency response in the international system, but much of this has taken place at the global level. Accountability has correspondingly been tending to concentrate at the macro systemic level, rather than what this means to affected populations themselves.

105. There may have been an opportunity cost of servicing the needs of an increasingly bureaucratic global system, which has the potential to distracted attention away from ensuring quality intervention at field level. In the view of the IASC itself; "*the application of the cluster approach has become overly process-driven and, in some situations, perceived to potentially undermine rather than enable delivery*."[58] In December 2011, the IASC Principals agreed to a set of actions that are intended to collectively represent a substantive improvement to the current humanitarian response model. These include an *"Enhanced accountability of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for the achievement of collective results"*. There remains a strong focus on accountability to the system rather than to beneficiaries or affected populations themselves, although there are more commitments to communicate more effectively with all stakeholders.

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[58] See opening paragraph at: http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87

106. It is important to note that the focus of the IASC guided international humanitarian system is predominantly on enabling better delivery in rapid onset humanitarian disasters. However, in 2010 for instance, some 68% of the total US$7.1 billion humanitarian assistance funded through the UN Consolidated Appeal Fund was actually directed towards largely on-going complex emergencies. Only 32% of the funding was provided for natural disasters (DI 2011:57). This proportion of activities matches with agencies own estimates provided during this review. The ICRC believes that its operations in protracted or on-going crisis situations is nearer to 80% of its work, with only some 20% involving rapid responses of a relatively unpredictable nature. The orientation of the international architecture to concentrate on approximately one third or less of likely contexts has encouraged speed at scale as the primary target, which is a challenge to ensuring participation of affected communities. The system as a whole has yet to agree how to cope with slow onset and protracted emergencies, or how to balance the need for participation in capital level cluster meetings and also ensure quality implementation. The existing formal humanitarian system is orientated towards emergency type responses to protracted or slowly developing situations. (For further detail please refer to p.52 Financing and Administration).

107. **Coordination.** Closely related to a systemic preference for rapid response style interventions, when multiple agencies are engaging with affected populations in a short time period, a lack of coordination between all stakeholders can result in the same population being subject to repeated multiple needs assessments of varying quality. In almost every large-scale crisis or disaster context, affected communities can give many examples of agencies which came to make assessments, took up a great deal of their time and never returned, even to give an explanation. These assessments often focus on the provision of information for agency programme design, rather than how communities themselves may determine their own vulnerabilities and capacities. This organisational behaviour becomes increasingly unacceptable the longer the crisis situation continues, and delays and prevarication is not helped by the demands of the international humanitarian architecture. Many of the decisions which affected communities are waiting to hear about are made at very distant cluster or inter-cluster levels of coordination, to which they have no representation in and no feedback from, representing a major constraint to participation.

108. **Agency capacity.** Human resources are a key factor in aid operations at all levels. The growing trend towards fewer international staff, and greater sub-contracting of local NGOs or CBOs to implement the work, increases the distance between policy and practice and sub- contracts risk to other (implementing) organisations. In large-scale interventions, humanitarian agencies tend to value more tangible technical skills, with less emphasis being placed on harder to measure softer skills, such as handling relationships, inter-acting with a diverse range of actors and being able to build consensus and ownership. Agency training prioritisation may vary from concentrating on representation to the humanitarian system (i.e. upwards accountability), to concentrating on capacity building with implementing partners to ensure predictable quality at field level. As highlighted by Norman (2012) *"it is important to clarify what is expected of staff in terms of meeting accountability commitments (e.g. knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes). The principles, knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that an organisation promotes must be supported with thorough briefing and training for all staff.*

Sufficient resources, funding and personnel need to be allocated for this briefing and training to ensure that it is regularly and consistently facilitated." (pp.58)

109. Therefore participatory relationships with donors, affected community and host government vary considerably depending on the HR policies, priorities and capacities of individual implementing agencies. Relationships with affected communities can be very much affected by the level of training provided for staff and implementing partners, the turnover of staff, the commitment to monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and senior level commitment to issues such as to transparency, as well as participation. Agencies highly committed to participation, such as DRC and SCF in East Africa, made it very clear during interviews that their best staff need to be <u>as close to the field as possible</u> and not caught in representation functions in Nairobi. However, the demands of the international system require increasing levels of institutional engagement, which without an increase in resources for implementing agencies to specifically fund this need, detracts from maintaining or increasing capacity for engagement with affected communities themselves.

3.5 Participation by sector

110. **Sector specific and integrated approaches.** Reflecting the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda there is a greater prominence of the sector or cluster as a factor of participation in more recent literature, including tools and sector specific guidelines. In practice however, most respondents consider that taking a broader non-sector or cluster based approach towards participation adequately covers the different sectors if applied in an integrated way. This sector specific versus an integrated approach perspective is not limited to issues of participation alone. The risk of accidentally "stove piping" humanitarian needs into clusters brings cross-cluster coordination challenges and it has little resonance with how affected populations might view their own situation or how they might chose to sequence and prioritise any support they might receive. The Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) for Somalia was clear that a needs assessment which comes up separately through the clusters is not a helpful approach. A large majority of those interviewed have gone further and regard the cluster system as directly undermining participation if used as a blueprint type approach. In terms of transparency with affected populations, several respondents noted that they could think of no example when the cluster system being used had actually been explained to the beneficiaries.

111. **"Service delivery" clusters, standards and protocols.** However, while the relevance and value of cross-cluster participatory approaches is repeatedly emphasised, there are accepted differences which were noted between more *"service delivery"* oriented sectors such as Health, certain aspects of Nutrition and, within WASH, the provision of water. In these areas, a set of established non-negotiable international standards and protocols strongly dominate humanitarian interventions especially in emergency situations. Participation in these areas is often more limited and generally acknowledged to be of less value terms of the actual technical decision-making process. Examples include agreed triggers for mass measles vaccination, the acceptable indicators for water quality and the specific procedures for implementing a therapeutic feeding programme.

112. But even in these instances, this still does not mean that there is no place for participation of affected populations. In the survey, some respondents stated that they had some difficulty in answering the sector related questions, as context is such a strongly determining factor. This view is certainly backed up in the subsequent field interviews, where even interventions as protocol-driven as tertiary health care still benefit from the participation of affected communities in actual implementation. For example, the ICRC-supported Medina Hospital in Mogadishu has benefitted from a 20 year process of promoting local ownership and responsibility, rooted in an inclusive independent community based hospital board. This board has been able to successfully entrench the value of the Medina Hospital services across the repeatedly conflict affected clan groups, allowing it to effectively function to serve the needs of its patients even through the most extreme conflict situations because its ownership, implementation and security is firmly overseen and ensured by a diverse local community rather than by an outside agency.

113. **Livelihoods Recovery and DRR.**   Both the e-survey and interview respondents regarded areas such as livelihoods recovery interventions and DRR as providing the best opportunities for participation – see figure 5 above - not least of which because community based capacities, contextual knowledge and decision making is so central to this type of work. Sustainability is very much based on communities own vision and within this frequently focussed right down to household or individual level. Self-selection of beneficiaries by communities themselves is common practice and programme time-frames tend to allow for more time to invest in these areas. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Guidelines for Cash Transfer Programming 2007[59], notes that there are a series of steps which can be taken to ensure that the community is consulted and involved as much as possible in the targeting of beneficiaries. These include; *"finding out about local social community structures and leadership, holding meetings, election of committee members by the whole community, and ensuring the committee agrees the criteria for beneficiary selection."* (pp 103)

114. **Food Security.** The Food Security sector is characterised by extremes of approaches in terms of participation. The "Emergency Food Security Assessment for North Kordofan, Sudan 2010"[60] concentrates heavily on qualitative and quantitative information gathering, but with no mention of participation. Whereas the Red Cross/Red Crescent guidelines on how to conduct a food security assessment includes several annexes detailing assessment using participatory methodologies, such as pair-wise ranking and proportional piling[61]. When using cash based approaches for food security interventions, a tendency to more participative approaches links this work more closely to the Livelihoods Recovery sector. In several contexts including Kenya, Somalia and Sri Lanka, the Food Security and Livelihoods Clusters have been combined under one leadership, as there is so much natural overlap in (mostly participatory) approaches and mutual goals.

115. **Protection.** For DG ECHO, Protection is regarded as both a sector and a cross cutting area. From both perspectives, participation has great relevance and importance to Protection work. For the ICRC

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[59] http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/guidelines/guidelines-cash-en.pdf
[60] http://www.wfp.org/content/sudan-emergency-food-security-assessment-north-kordofan-october-2010 (WFP002)
[61] http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/food_security/fs-assessment.pdf

it concerns the first fundamental principle; that of Humanity: *"Showing respect to individuals in situations of extreme vulnerability, such as detention, signifies recognition of shared humanity. It implies inter alia, taking the time and having the empathy to listen to, and interact with individuals and communities."*[62] In a sectoral sense, ensuring the respect of international norms, principles, laws, protocols and conventions as well as relevant national laws and commitments requires complex participative approaches and long-term commitment. Establishing and verifying instances where violations of these obligations have taken place requires a rigorous process to establish an evidence-base, frequently based on individual cases; *"Protection actors must seek to engage in dialogue with persons at risk and ensure their participation in activities directly affecting them."* (ICRC 2009 pp. 22).

116. The scope of protection work is very diverse and context specific. It may extend from liaising with the concerned authorities regarding detained persons, through to representation on issues of land rights or the active restoration of family links, such as tracing missing persons and reuniting children separated from their families. The commitment is often necessarily long-term and the ICRC was very clear in interviews that it will not allow any protection caseload to become a forgotten one; even if it takes 20 or more years before a dialogue can be re-established regarding issues such as the missing. These precise interventions represent some of the most considered and long term participative work in humanitarian intervention.

117. In terms of prevention, Protection actors may take more public stances to ensure the respect of humanitarian principles, laws and humanitarian space. For example, both in "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza (2008-2009)[63] and the Sri Lanka Conflict in 2009[64] the ICRC, which is normally reserved in making public statements, undertook public advocacy to promote respect for International Humanitarian Law, press for humanitarian access and the protection of civilians. Often in combination with discrete and often confidential interventions with the concerned authorities, public advocacy may include diverse ways of ensuring the relevant stakeholders are able to access and understand essential information. Direct presentations and input to training courses to armed forces, building relationships and providing information to other weapons carriers (such as Hamas)[65]. At different levels radio and poster campaigns are common areas of attempting to improve awareness and reduce risks to civilians. More innovative approaches include drama and involving popular musicians in campaigns at national and even international levels, such as the ICRC "So Why?" campaign dating back to 1997[66]. The mass information provision of these approaches is usually directly linked to instructions of who and how to contact should individuals need to establish a personal dialogue with the relevant protection agency. Defining the impact of such diverse approaches to protection in complex environments is often challenging. For the ICRC, the active participation of at risk populations holds the key to accountability; *"Actively engaging at-risk populations in protection activities provides a means for them to judge the*

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[62] *ICRC (2009) Professional Standards for protection Work. pp. 22*

[63] http://jurist.org/paperchase/2010/06/gaza-blockade-violates-international-law-icrc.php

[64] http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/sri-lanka-news-140509.htm

[65] http://electronicintifada.net/content/red-cross-training-gaza-fighters-international-humanitarian-law/7239

[66] http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/57jnsv.htm

performance of protection actors – which serves to increase the accountability of these actors." (ICRC 2009 pp 23).

118. **Child Protection.** Other aspects of protection work such as Child Protection also benefit from a combination of a clearly defined legal base (the Convention on the Rights of the Child and broader Human Rights legislation), coupled with a strong participatory ethos. For example, the World Vision International (WVI) Strategy 2011-2015 states: *"Children have a right to live freely from abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect, and be able to develop physically, mentally, spiritually, morally and socially. We will identify the most vulnerable children, particularly those deprived of parental care and those who find themselves on the margins of or excluded from communities. We will work with families and communities, and at the local, national and international level, to ensure all children receive the care and protection they need."*[67] Throughout the range of protection activities the requirement for members of the affected community to be included in dialogue because it is an unequivocal legal right, does much to focus attention on the needs of the victim. Protection work correspondingly seems rather less distracted by demands of the international system as its role is already clearly defined.

119. **Education.** Participatory approaches and establishing dialogue are intrinsic to protection work and the often adverse circumstances seemingly strengthen resolve, extend the length of commitment and often encourage creative new approaches. For example, approaching Education through a protection approach (such as DG ECHO supported programmes in Northern Uganda) has considerable merits[68]. Multi-sector agencies with considerable protection expertise such as DRC and NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council) are able to access protection issues through generally non-controversial schools rehabilitation programmes with medium term programme commitments to be able to build trust and dialogue with communities. At the same time, the assistance side of the schools rehabilitation provides immediate protection advantages for children enrolled in school, able to access multiple information sources provided for their own safety and well-being and not being left alone while their parents and families return to rebuild their lives and livelihoods in rural areas.

120. **Humanitarian de-mining**. Humanitarian de-mining is a specialist area (within the Protection Cluster) in which community participation is increasingly integrated within the operational approaches of many specialist agencies including The HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Danish Demining Group (DDG) and Handicap International (HI). Rather than measuring success on the number of land mines or unexploded ordinance (UXO) removed from an area, the focus on releasing the land most prioritised by community itself has huge benefits, as was the case in Northern Sri Lanka (2011) where key agricultural land and local services were prioritised in those areas where return was taking place. As well as enabling a safe return to their houses, the work also meant that 600 wells, two schools, a hospital, five water tanks for irrigation purposes, five square kilometers of agricultural land and 20

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[67] World Vision International (2011) *Inspiring action for the world's poorest children: Introducing our Strategy for 2011-2015*. (pp. 7) London: WVI (WV002)

[68] Barham, J. et al (2011) Evaluation of DG ECHO'S Action in Uganda. Brussels: DG ECHO (EC016)

small business premises were all available for the community[69]. This allows the essential access to services and transport to be provided first while less prioritised areas are clearly marked as contaminated and can be de-mined at a later date.

3.6 Cross cutting issues

121. **Protection.** In the same way as sector/cluster issues are best covered with broader approaches to participation, cross cutting issues are also felt to be most appropriately approached by ensuring the application of broadly agreed good practice. For instance, in terms of Protection as a cross cutting issue in both natural disaster and conflict contexts, a lack of effective community participation can lead to exacerbating or generating local conflicts between communities or within communities. The issue of protection includes relationships between potential beneficiary and non-beneficiary groups and is at the very heart of ensuring good practice, "Do No Harm" and conflict sensitive approaches. Therefore the notion of ensuring effective participation with the entire "affected community" is of much greater relevance than consideration of participation with already pre-selected vulnerable groups or sector specific identified beneficiaries. It is in the area of Protection that the potential risks of attempting participation through separate sectors or clusters become most clear. Attempting to put together a number of separate sector assessments, plans and projects into a coherent programme is a challenge in itself, but particularly challenging in terms of Do No Harm. Every sector may pose its own potential risks which are most likely interrelated with, or the same as those posed by working in other sectors. It is hard to imagine a more time consuming or complex way of identifying and addressing a single set of issues than approaching them in perhaps six or more different (sector specific) exercises at the same time.

122. There are also examples of ensuring protection through good practice being taken further, and into promoting "Local Capacities for Peace" through otherwise on protection-focussed programming. For example, ICRC cash for work programmes in northern Kenya in 2011 brought together rival Pokot and Turkana tribes in a rare opportunity for reconciliation, through shared programme implementation at community level. But in all these areas of protection, local dynamics within and between communities can change rapidly and the drivers of tension can be local ones, or local reactions to their perceptions of national or even international events and announcements. The role of effective participation is to ensure vigilance and reduce the frequency of unexpected tension arising. But participation alone does not necessarily provide the solutions, and situations may require resources and expertise which participation may help identify and prioritise, but which may not necessarily be available.

123. **Gender.** The role of Gender as a cross cutting issue repeatedly emerges as one of particular importance in participation. Not only can vulnerability be directly attributed to men or women facing different forms of exclusion or specific vulnerability, but this can be exacerbated by other factors which make considerations of adequate participation particularly important. For instance, in Somalia, women in marginalised clans suffer disproportionally greater sexual gender based violence (SGBV),

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[69] http://www.maginternational.org/MAG/en/news/sri-lanka-community-rebirth-in-wartorn-mullaitivu/

and these minority clans constitute the majority of the IDPs in Somalia[70]. It is well recognised that in many contexts, traditional community leadership and representation will specifically exclude women and it may take time and investment to gradually gain greater acceptance of women's roles amongst leaders. Examples were given from Somalia, where women's groups and committees are now accepted as representatives in community decision making processes. Their role is clearly valued and not disputed today, but it took considerable negotiation to have women's groups accepted even in principle, as this had not been a traditional role in community decision-making processes.

124. Gender sensitive participative approaches clearly hold significant opportunities in addressing issues of vulnerability and exclusion. In a joint ICRC/BRCS (British Red Cross Society) community based livelihoods recovery project in Sri Lanka, female community facilitators were not only able to undertake very effective capacity building work in their own communities, but young Tamil women facilitators were more easily accepted in neighbouring Muslim villages with which there had been repeated conflict. The subsequent thriving local projects which resulted, rapidly built huge community appreciation of these individuals in rival ethnic communities and provided highly valuable potential opportunities for mutual intercommunity reconciliation. In many contexts women are seen as less involved or concerned with previous political disputes or conflicts and as such are better placed to appear less threatening then men when engaging with different communities, tribes or clans on specific issues. Frequently women have a specific role in more traditional communities and may be left relatively free to work in such areas as community based health, education or specific areas of livelihoods recovery. This demarcation of areas where women are accepted can nonetheless mean that it is harder for women to be accepted in other areas traditionally regarded as being under the control of men, and can be regarded as being potentially threatening to traditional leadership.

125. **DRR.** Factors such as agricultural seasons, water scarcity, highly complex interrelationships regarding livestock ownership, access to veterinary services and grazing land often make livelihoods recovery and community based DRR programmes almost indistinguishable. The widespread use (see e-survey figure 6 below) of VCA and PRA type approaches with community risk mapping soon reveals specific needs which can be directly referred to other clusters/sectors without them having to make initial assessments themselves.

126. In ideal circumstances being able to ensure sustainable economic security and resilience in a community also potentially provides the community's independent access to some other sectors (such as health or education) simply because of the purchasing power which is generated. This may have been the way that services were accessed pre-disaster or pre-conflict and may be more appropriate that providing substitution type interventions in other sectors which provide services directly instead. However, due to often short programme timeframes or funding windows, not all humanitarian agencies feel able to address DRR issues in humanitarian programming from the start of their intervention. Although DRR funding may be agreed at a later date, or the agency simply chooses to

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[70] Hill, M (2010) *No redress: Somalia's forgotten minorities*. London: Minority Rights Group (MRG001)

consider DRR after the initial situation has stabilised, early opportunities to avoid "reconstructing risk" or vulnerability may be missed, even if they have been revealed through participatory engagement.

Figure 6. Which participatory methodologies/tools/provisions/approaches are widely used in your organisation? (Qu.4)
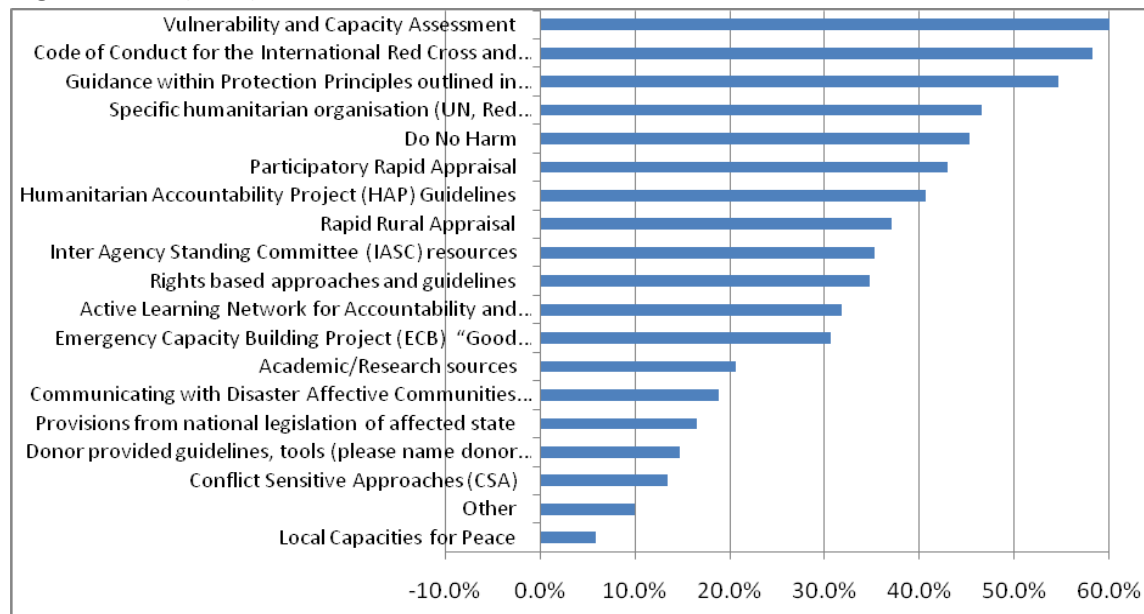
127. **Environmental Impact.** There is potential for negative or positive environmental impact in almost all humanitarian interventions. Participation of the affected population is critical to adequately inform programme design and to ensure populations themselves are sufficiently aware of the potential environmental consequences of new interventions. Similar to livelihoods recovery or DRR work, the affected population may have unrivalled contextual knowledge of local hazard risk, land use and potential negative and positive impact of community aspirations. But even where the affected population is displaced to new contexts, the people themselves will play a key potential role in ensuring that facilities (such as water and sanitation infrastructure) are properly used, that waste (such as packaging from distributions) is properly dealt with and local resources (such as firewood) are not exhausted.

128. Without community participation and the involvement of local leadership, individuals are unlikely to engage in agency directives and policies directly. They are also much more likely to cause negative environmental effects through lack of understanding, lack of compliance or lack of trust and confidence which encourages them to take survival type decisions with regrettable environmental consequences. In camp settings, there are many good examples of community mobilisation to take responsibility for the cleanliness, sanitation, drainage and even security of their own areas of responsibility. In large scale scenarios, such as Ngara Refugee camp in Tanzania in 1994, the potential for severe environmental damage became rapidly evident in the need for firewood, with insufficient agency capacity to provide alternatives to prevent rapid deforestation and potential conflict with the local population. However, camp settings are frequently located in places where the affected

population is unlikely to invest in environmentally. This may be because it is poor and marginalised land, the population intend to leave as soon as they can, or they feel threatened and unwelcome in the location. These challenges are difficult to overcome by participation alone, but are more likely to result in positive outcomes within the immediate environment of a displaced population. The environmental awareness raised and relationships built through participation can also be very valuable to be built on when a displaced population is eventually able to return home.

129. **Children.** An increasing number of agencies are strengthening their focus on the perspective of children in humanitarian contexts. Their approaches are often highly participatory to ensure that the needs of children are better met, as well as to unlock the existing and potential capacities within a community which children can offer. In the view of PLAN India, *"Participation is an inviolable right of the child. Child Participation assumes greater significance in the face of situations such as a post-disaster scenario, where in it serves as a useful tool since it is a direct outcome of involving a child's perspective, which is sufficiently different from an adult's. Children display intimate knowledge of communities and an insight into social behaviour patterns, which facilitates the process of recovery. They are also emotionally more resilient and therefore provide sound solutions. Quick to form bonds with the peer group, involving children helps them overcome trauma as well."[71]* . WVI also places children as its first priority in its Strategy 2011-2015. *"Priority 1: Evidence of Real Change for Children: We will reduce the impact of natural disasters and conflict on children by helping communities, countries and the international community to prepare for, respond to and recover from humanitarian crises. Through our partnerships with World Vision offices in high risk areas we will improve our understanding of risks and vulnerabilities, and build this into our programme."(pp 5)*. The review revealed that in practice too, humanitarian agencies are increasingly aware of the potentially positive role of children's participation throughout the response cycle level. Children participation has its limits though, and in many difficult contexts adults are understandably unwilling to share the full realities of the injustices, indignities or threats they face or have faced in the past. Adult populations may not take kindly to external agencies burdening young minds with traumatic issues, even if, in reality these may be possible to address sensitively and appropriately. When children take part in reconciliation exercises (for instance between schools from each side of inter-communal divides), adults may have understandable reason to fear for their safety, and be unwilling to let their children take part.

130. **HIV/AIDS.** This review did not interview anyone with specific responsibilities for HIV/AIDS programming at present. But several interlocutors had experience of highly community- based combined HIV/AIDS and food security programmes from southern Africa. For example, IFRC Home Based Care programmes in Zambia and Zimbabwe[72] have at their core, teams of volunteers working with People living with AIDS and HIV (PLWA) in their homes, balancing their need for nutritious food supplements with other household needs and a strong community based approach to reducing stigma through advocacy. The acceptance and tolerance for PLWA in communities has been a significant

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[71] Plan International (2005) pp. 5. *Children and the Tsunami. Engaging with children in disaster response, recovery and risk reduction: Learning from children's participation in the tsunami response*. Bangkok: Plan Ltd (PL001)

[72] http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/africa/zambia/zambia-red-cross-volunteers-extend-lifeline-to-people-living-with-hiv-and-aids/

achievement, helping populations also affected by chronic food insecurity to deal with multiple challenges more holistically. The reduction in stigma allows the myths related to HIV/AIDs to be separated from the realities, which is vital to raise awareness and reinforce prevention, particularly amongst young people in difficult times when they may be more exposed to HIV/AIDs through exploitation and risky behaviour.

131. In northern Uganda in 2007, the Uganda Red Cross Northern Uganda Relief Operation (NURO) so successfully integrated a dynamic HIV/AIDS awareness programme into its support to IDP camps, that the local Uganda Armed Forces command requested permission to take part, and for additional programmes for their own troops stationed in the area. Although not intended as a target population for the Uganda Red Cross, armed forces stationed in close proximity to vulnerable IDPs in any context both face and pose a serious risk of HIV infection, and are therefore a key stakeholder for active participation. Most HIV/AIDs awareness programmes actively involve as many sections of the population in participation as possible, through drama, music, role play and community meetings and sensitisation. The "*inverted pyramid*" approach of the Uganda Red Cross multiplied delivery capacity through training of trainers approaches with volunteers within the beneficiary communities themselves, with repeated community sessions being coordinated with WASH sensitisation sessions and other large beneficiary gatherings for food, NFRI and regular soap distributions. But when situations change, even with the increased awareness of risk that participation may enable, the reality of sections of destitute populations being forced into early marriages, sexual exploitation and risky behaviour will still arise. In these situations, the focus of participation and the potential solutions it reveals will need to be addressed through linking with other cross cutting and sectoral approaches to address the root causes – of which increased exposure to HIV/AIDS is only one of the symptoms.

3.7 Financing and administrative arrangements of participation

132. Attempting to undertake a full cost-benefit analysis of participation is beyond the scope of this review, and would be a particularly challenging exercise because the definition of participation is not agreed. Although there is much literature covering the positive results of appropriate participation, including in terms of programme effectiveness and efficiency, this is rarely expressed in financial or quantifiable measures. But at the same time, understanding participation through financial and administrative processes is critical to give the necessary flexibility and operating space for these approaches to develop. It is key to measure the effectiveness for its value to be more widely justified, and recognised by stakeholders in financial and administrative roles.

133. Donor constraints in terms of reporting and financing are often cited in the literature as playing a key role in aspects of participation. The HAP Pakistan deployment 2011 states *"concerns were raised about limited resourcing of accountability and quality issues" and that "without allocation for activities such as information provision to affected communities, procedure and personnel to collect and address their concerns, critical aspects of effective aid delivery remain missing."* [73] The report also stresses the impact of donor push for tight deadlines for the submission of proposals, and the time needed by

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[73] Kiani, M (2011) pp 8 *Report of the HAP Deployment To Pakistan 3rd January – 4th February 2011.* London:HAP (HAP0025)

agencies for detailed reporting and suggests there *"is a need for leaner reporting and funding mechanisms so that staff time can be better managed and concentrated on the emergency response."* (2011:8) Concern Worldwide[74] concluded that there were three key elements to the success of their campaign to increase accountability through increased participation; firstly the financial and HR support from headquarters, secondly adequate time allocation, and thirdly, support of senior management and further staff input.

134. Linked to the above pressures is the over arching funding architecture that is often triggered by the "CNN effect". Parakrama (2007) writes that *"the way in which the humanitarian sector is funded, by sudden inputs following public appeals, encourages an emphasis on rapid service delivery' exaggeration of the agencies own importance and understatement of the role of local people."* [75]

135. Agencies interviewed at a working level (Nairobi and Delhi) were generally positive about the donor role, and instead concentrated on their agency's own limitations. This was mirrored by the e-survey in which donor frameworks, funding and grant procedures appeared to least affect success or failure in terms of inclusion of participation. For those agencies seeking to strengthen general good practice at project level, including participation, the cost of a greater focus on capacity building of local staff or partners, or investment in developing their MEL as a way of assessing their strengths and weaknesses at programme level has been largely accepted by DG ECHO and other donors. Choices of financing appear to lie largely with the agencies that choose either to invest in accountability mechanisms through hiring of accountability officers; or additional staff who can attend cluster meetings or to invest in the capacity building of the local partners.

136. Flexibility of grants is in-built to some extent in most humanitarian donors funding programmes. (in those of DG ECHO, DFID, OFDA for example). However the predominant issue with respect to effective and responsive community participation concerns the level of administrative and bureaucratic work that is required to 'enact' that required flexibility; this can result in agencies preferring to justify why they are not changing, rather than making those changes. The quality of the relationship with the donor, and to some extent the level of risk that the donor is prepared to take in the initial stages of a proposal play a key role. All partners interviewed stressed the key role the DG ECHO Technical Assistants (TAs) play and general appreciation was expressed in this regard.

137. Interviewees expressed a clear difficulty for dynamic short-term responses in establishing appropriate documentation as required by some donors (such as logical frameworks, Gantt charts and indicators and benchmarks) in the first few days. The situation on the ground can change rapidly and participative approaches may reveal very different priorities developing than initially appeared to be the case. Participation can then – wrongly - just become another output (i.e. such as reporting on how many meetings or focus group discussions were held or just not recorded). In addition, the incompatible nature of rigid programme plans and on-going participation results in the risk of inappropriate outcomes being transferred downwards – to those at field level interacting with

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[74] http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/hap-initiatives-in-concern-worldwide-a-case-study-of-bangladesh-2008.pdf (HAP003)

[75] Impact of the Tsumani response on local and national capacities; Forced Migration Review 28 July 2007: p.7

community, rather than upwards to the agency-donor relationship which is more based on documentary procedures and accountability for delivering outputs.   In challenging, dynamic situations such as Somalia, the process of making changes to pre- agreed rigid programme plans creates increased bureaucratic and financial hurdles for agencies to overcome, as a necessary price of reorienting the programme to changing needs.

138. Third party monitors, brought in by the funding agency in Somalia to reduce this risk results in monitors being required to monitor the monitors. DRC Somalia has created their own due diligence and developed SOPs which the donor then has to agree to as well as the partners on the ground. This is an attempt to share the burden of the multiple risks of working in an environment where the programme may be stalled, delayed, significantly changed or subject to a range of unforeseen events. The stakeholders therefore agree to work to overcome challenges as they emerge, rather than place the blame on any one party and cite the usual pre-agreed contractual agreements which must be adhered to.

139. DFID's approach to risk management and value for money (VfM) also means seeing accountability through the lens of ensuring sustainable outputs. This has encouraged the development of longer term dual humanitarian-development programmes in northern Kenya which support agencies to undertake longer-term programming (typically nutrition and social protection), but which include a "risk facility" for surge to respond to any unforeseen crisis which may occur in the project period. However, the present tools for measuring VfM focus on the cost of input and the cost per output. The third measure, the cost per impact, is still seen as being too difficult to measure generally, including in humanitarian work and is, unfortunately in that context, where the role of participatory approaches would bring most value. DFID's present move towards requiring guarantees of "*due diligence*" from its partners in contexts such as Somalia focuses heavily on auditing their organisational systems of accountability. *This is likely to extend beyond examining systemic issues of accountability and may in time bring a greater focus on agency capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), which would also encourage participatory feedback from affected populations as part of the process*.

4. Delivering participation in practice

4.1 Approaches to participation

140. Despite the strong consensus on the benefits of participation in the right contexts, there is less clarity in policy literature on how *"to do"* participation. Some key areas emerging from the research reveal a range of views and flexible approaches being broadly supported within a "continuum" of participation.

141. **A continuum of participation.** Much of the available literature describes a "*continuum*" of participation, broadly agreed to start with external actors simply providing information to affected communities of programme decisions. This interpretation is strongly supported by interviewees, who

explain that the continuum then progresses through increasing levels of collaboration, towards full community management and eventually to community "*ownership*" of the intervention. At this point, the external actor's role becomes one of providing advice and guidance. A good example of the theory of participation is provided below in figure 7, which also illustrates the notion of a gradual transfer of "*control*" of the project away from the agency and towards the affected community.

Figure 7: Community Participation (SCF)	
More local control	Local actors (women and men) manage the project; external actors* offer advice.
	Local and external actors manage the project together through counterpart relationships.
	Local and external actors implement activities together combining local knowledge and external contributions. External actors retain management and monitoring responsibilities.
	Local and external actors make decisions together using joint analysis and planning processes. External actors implement, manage and monitor projects.
	Community members are consulted by external actors seeking local information and perceived needs. External actors plan based on information from the community and then implement, manage and monitor projects.
Less local control	Community members are informed by external actors regarding planned programmes. External actors plan, implement, manage and monitor projects.
*Humanitarian NGO workers/implementing agency staff from outside the community.	

142. **More limited participation in "traditional" programmes.** In the past, many large scale humanitarian programmes have only embraced some early steps on this continuum and some programmes still reflect these approaches today. Participation has often been viewed largely in terms of what the community itself can bring to the intervention, such as labour or local natural resources (such as sand or aggregates for construction purposes). There has also usually been a degree of "*consultation*" with affected communities, but this has often been undertaken with the objective of extracting information to guide programme design. This in turn is used to develop funding applications to donors. Information on the decisions made by the agency is not necessarily fed back to the affected community, especially if funding is not forthcoming and the agency may never return. Where a programme does go ahead, the community, or more likely just the beneficiaries selected from the community, are perhaps only consulted again in the process of monitoring or evaluation. Non-beneficiaries, such as host families, are rarely consulted and neighbouring communities very rarely considered at all. Monitoring or evaluation has tended to concentrate quantitative rather than

qualitative indicators.

143. **Commonly used approaches today.** In a slow onset or chronic situation an adaptation of long established methodologies such as VCA or PRA are by far the most commonly used approaches to facilitate a participative needs assessment. By their very nature these approaches soon reveal DRR issues as perceived at community level. For example, the BRCS post Tsunami livelihoods recovery programmes in Sri Lanka in 2005/2006[76] used a PRA approach which was very compatible with wider IFRC DRR work based on a VCA methodology (IFRC's Disaster Preparedness Department produced its first guide to VCA, "Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment" in 1999[77]).

144. **Naturally linking response to DRR and LRRD.** In ideal circumstances, the PRA or VCA type approaches will lead to the development of some form of Community Action Plan (CAP) where agencies and affected communities identify, prioritise and implement activities together, drawing on each others capacities and resources. This is very much a development type approach and at this point, through the CAP, the ownership becomes more held firmly in the hands of the affected community. This brings into play a natural LRRD step and one in which more than one humanitarian agency subscribing to the same approach should naturally work in a very collaborative manner, as well as with the affected. Action Aid[78] has developed a participatory vulnerability analysis that was a step by step guide aimed to link both disaster preparedness and response to long term development.

145. Evidence at the operations level clearly shows that participation of affected communities in DRR projects is the most widespread and this is due not only to the design and nature of much DRR work focused around community development planning, but also to the length of grant (i.e. multi-year DIPECHO funding) and the nature of what it is trying to achieve. In addition, the community will not have undergone the trauma or shock, as well as removing the majority of other constraints. For example, UNICEF in India is changing the name of the Emergency Dept to DRR in recognition of the growing awareness that resilience and preparedness is a more effective (and much cheaper) way of addressing weaknesses at community level which compound disasters (this move also better reflects Government of India policy).

146. **The Household Economy Approach.** In more rapid onset situations, the first steps in participatory approaches can be achieved by the Household Economy Approach, which is less time consuming than more development or DRR derived PRA and VCA methods. This approach was developed by Save the Children Fund in the 1970's and has increasingly been used and adapted by agencies in humanitarian interventions. The whole Household Economy approach is participatory by nature. It accepts that immediate needs may be met by "substitution" (such as providing food in kind, or providing health care) or by "facilitation" (such as providing means of employment, or replacing lost means of production for communities to be able to buy food, or access to health care, education or to meet other unmet needs). But the decision on how to best meet those needs is based on

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[76] http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/resources/casestudies/cash-transfers-for-livelihoods-in-eastern-sri-lanka.pdf

[77] IFRC (2006) What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment (IF009)

[78] Action Aid (2005) Participatory Vulnerability Analysis A step–by–step guide for field staff. London

information obtained from the community, typically in group discussions. The current guidelines, written in 2000, state that; "*approach each case with an open mind – there are absolutely no fixed ways of getting community level information.*"[79]

147. **Cash based programming.** After many years of reticence, the recent rapid growth in interest and donor support for cash based responses which by their very nature use participatory approaches. Looking beyond cash based responses as just one set of tools to be used as appropriate with other approaches to assistance, the use of cash by default places more responsibility on the beneficiary. Beneficiary choice becomes better understood through cash-based work. Because of the fungible nature of cash, accountability and monitoring tends to be more focussed on outcomes than simple delivery of the cash, which is anyway increasingly made through electronic means in many contexts, as the following example from the Gaza Strip shows[80]:

Box 4: Benefits of cash-based programming; Gaza Strip

"Choice, flexibility and dignity were the other positive aspects that beneficiaries pointed out during focus group discussions. Beneficiaries were able to choose what they needed and to do so when they wanted. They appreciated the flexibility to decide when to go to the shop and this gave them a sense of respect. Beneficiaries also mentioned that they were happy that their names were not exposed to public lists. The new SMS system to inform beneficiaries when to collect the vouchers, was considered very discrete. The system is almost anonymous compared to the previous one when names were advertised on public lists. Shopkeepers were helpful to beneficiaries that were considered as any other customer. Participants also mentioned that "we can bring our children in the shops without any worry of looking like beggars."

148. However, Cross & Johnston (2011)[81] suggest that the issue of vulnerability needs to be understood in order to ensure the right kind of programme. The resource has an annex of tools including a format for beneficiary complaints log, a telephone complaints protocol and post cash transfer beneficiary monitoring form, all the same key elements of accountability as mentioned above.

149. **Sector and Cluster approaches.** Reflecting the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda, there is a greater prominence of the sector or cluster as a factor of participation in more recent literature. This has resulted in a number of sector or cluster specific guidelines being produced, but the framing of participation from a sector perspective differed substantially from the responses made in interviews and in the e-survey. For example, while the WASH Cluster Guidelines on Participation[82] are widely appreciated as being practical and relevant, respondents feel that their content is perhaps up to 80% applicable across most other sectors or clusters. But because of the WASH cluster title, knowledge of the existence of these specific guidelines is unfortunately limited across other sectors or clusters.

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[79] Seaman, J et al (2000, pp 72) *The Household Economy Approach A resource manual for practitioners.* Save the Children International

[80] Creti (2011) The Voucher Programme in the Gaza Strip. Mid Term Review World Food Programme/Oxfam

[81] Cross T & Johnston (2011) A CALP Cash Transfer Programming in Urban Emergencies, A Toolkit for Practitioners. London: CALP

[82] Global WASH Cluster (2009) *WASH Accountability Resources. Ask, Listen, Communicate*. (HAP010)

150. One such example of good practice regarding the participation of older people explains how; *"A lack of mobility, joint pain and arthritis affect not just the quality of life but also the ability of older people to engage as active members of the community, or to access health, food and water...Physical infrastructure, such as latrines, can be made more accessible for older users (and for other vulnerable groups) with relatively little effort"[83]* Again, the cross-sectoral nature of vulnerabilities identified by HelpAge is only partly applicable to the WASH cluster initiative which highlights them in its accountability exercise.

151. **Agency specific guidelines.** Agencies themselves have also developed specific guidelines on how to undertake participatory approaches. For example, Tearfund has developed a series of agency guides for staff under the accountability framework, with a focus on 5 practical stages to good beneficiary accountability; participation (see box 5 below); transparency; feedback and complaints; monitoring and evaluation, and staff competencies and attitudes. DRC Programme Handbook 2008[84] says *"community based participatory approach is an over- riding principle in all DRC programmes be it income generating activities, physical rehabilitation, repatriation etc. …..participation of the stakeholders…in all phases and sectors of a programme is paramount and a precondition for DRC involvement."*

Box 5: Tearfund Guidance for Project Staff[85]

Good participation means that individuals have the opportunity to voice their concerns and to express their preferences throughout all stages of the project cycle process. Project staff must make sure that they:

- Obtain informed consent from the community at the start of the project;
- Confirm that they are happy for the project to go ahead;
- Involve their participation in needs assessments and project design;
- Agree selection criteria for beneficiaries with the community;
- Involve the beneficiaries and community in all stages of monitoring and evaluation.

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152. **Agency approaches are more significant than specific guidelines.** The volume and breadth of current policy, standards and guidelines might imply that there is a major challenge in ensuring coherence and consistency across the actors in a given situation. But successive interviews and the survey reveal that in reality this is far from the case. There was strong agency identification with their institutional approaches to participation, at the operational level all interlocutors felt free to use a

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[83] HelpAge International (2007) Report on an Inter Agency Review November INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE 69TH WORKING GROUP MEETING

[84] http://www.drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/What_we_do/chapter_8e_social_rehabilitation.pdf (DRC005)

[85] Tearfund (REF) Tearfund's Commitment to Beneficiary Accountability: *An Introduction to the Purpose of Beneficiary Accountability and Some Practical Steps for Carrying it Out (TF002)*

wide range of methodologies and guidelines that fitted within the agency approach. No single interlocutor felt restricted to use specific agency methodologies or guidelines. In fact they appreciated having a broad range of mainstream tools to choose from, and to be able to apply these as they felt most appropriate to the specific context.

4.2 Potential risks and challenges

153. The positive aspects of participatory work are repeatedly reported in a wide range of contexts and types of humanitarian work. When well implemented, with experienced and competent staff, the establishment of a dialogue from the outset will alert the agency to the potential risks and challenges ahead. If issues of Protection or Do No Harm are revealed, it is through participation itself that these dangers may be realised and the decision may be made to not intervene any further, or to try to intervene in a very different way than first planned. Therefore, although there are risks and challenges associated with participatory approaches, these are significantly reduced with a proper context analysis and sensitive approach. Some examples of these potential risks and challenges follow:

Potential Risks

154. The findings from literature, interviews and the e-survey demonstrate strong consensus on the potential benefits of participation, but also highlight potential risks and challenges. Risks include those which may complicate or undermine the actual process of participation itself, as well as other risks which may arise from otherwise successful participation having taken place. Potentially serious risks surround more profound protection concerns in unstable or conflict affected contexts. The concerned authorities, *de facto* authorities, armed forces or other weapons carriers may have strong reasons for not allowing participative approaches with affected populations. Highly restricted humanitarian access to contexts such as IDP camps in Northern Sri Lanka in 2009 may make it inadvisable to even attempt meaningful dialogue with affected populations. Serious protection concerns could be the result for individuals and groups who have been witnessed speaking to aid workers, even if this concerned non contentious issues.

155. **Manipulation by community leaders.** There are increasing numbers of contexts where the operating environment is so challenging, and aid agencies can be so manipulated by community leaders, that there are practical limitations to the level of participation and even transparency which can be realistically employed. One interlocutor explained how, when negotiating humanitarian access in Darfur, Sudan, he understood every word of the "*complete manipulation of the community*" by their leaders, as (unbeknown to them) he spoke fluent Arabic. Without the presence of these leaders, no one in the community dared to talk to any outsiders, and the representation provided in their name was utterly false. Tearfund has recently concluded research into Monitoring and Accountability Practices for Remote Managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments and concludes that "*traditional approaches to promote beneficiary participation, feedback and complaints*

handling and information-sharing were shown to be ineffective or unsafe for beneficiaries and/or project staff."[86]

156. In other contexts, such as Somalia, although traditional elders are the main route to the community and are consulted routinely, many interlocutors regard them as undertaking their role as a transactional activity, for which influence and payment will be required from the assistance agreed. This "transactional" viewpoint may be a very different one from that of the most vulnerable, although not necessarily different from the majority of the community. Similarly, in this context, a risk of establishing complaints and feedback mechanisms is that the focus on perceived "grievances" (such as perceived inter clan or inter-tribal inequalities) is prioritised before genuine humanitarian need. Certainly in some contexts there appears to be considerable potential for such feedback mechanisms to be manipulated and distorted in by those which hold power and who will exclude access for the most vulnerable. In northern Kenya for instance, specialist services can anyway be contracted to research organisational structures, write complaints and repeatedly send them to the agency board of directors or other key personnel. This approach could easily be adapted to lock into more participative feedback mechanisms, which in "remote control" environments would be extremely difficult for the agency to manage.

157. **Transparency.** Whist ensuring transparency in participation is universally agreed to be valuable, there can also be potential risks too. IFRC Kenya gave the example of two Afar communities in Ethiopia, which had been provided with exactly the same type and size of agricultural dam as prioritised by themselves as a key recovery intervention. While they would have been happy with the intervention, the agency's transparency priority regarding the budgeting and building costs ultimately caused almost insurmountable problems. One of the two communities refused to accept that, because of the local geological conditions, what had cost $80,000 for their dam required $120,000 for the otherwise identical dam of the neighbouring community. Despite the fact that each community had benefited from the same facility, the perceived inequality caused demands for the difference to be made up in cash with the differences of view being extremely difficult to resolve.

158. **Ensuring Appropriate Representation.** But within the process of implementing participative approaches themselves one of the biggest areas of risk is guaranteeing the proper representation and inclusion of all affected stakeholders and groups. While in many societies, traditional leadership and representation may systematically exclude the most vulnerable, there are also significant risks associated with trying to establish more inclusive representation, such as requiring attendance of women's groups or minority groups in dialogue. If handled insensitively, or perceived to be imposed, attempts to improve inclusion can be seen to threaten traditional leadership, or may be interpreted as attempting to encourage a democratic process that can threaten the concerned authorities. This presents a potential issue of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity. It may need a long period of time to

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[86] Norman (2012) pp 2 Monitoring and accountability practices for remotely managed projects implemented in volatile operating environments. London: Tearfund

build sufficient trust for more inclusive or rights based approaches to participation to become accepted. Several such examples were provided in interviews, such as in Somalia where it took many months for women's representatives to be accepted in leadership meetings in principle. But once agreed, then then the principle was upheld and women representatives have continued to play a strong role.

159. **Sensitivity.** In other contexts it is simply not seen as appropriate to consult some groups in public as they are traditionally used to being represented by others. Great sensitivity is needed in taking steps to ensure inclusion of individuals in such groups, either directly or through genuine representation by others. But because of the nature of humanitarian work the time frame to adequately try to address these issues may simply not be available. Any mistakes may risk inadvertently placing those one seeks to help at additional risk, or even increasing their levels of exclusion. A good example of these issues being handled sensitively has been seen in the livelihoods recovery work of Save the Children Fund in northern Sri Lanka in 2010[87]. In a sensitive security and protection environment, widows (or women whose husbands were missing from the conflict) preferred to be represented by the organisation's young women community facilitators who were both accessible and sensitive to their needs but not intimidated in maintaining dialogue with the concerned authorities, armed forces and external visitors.

160. **Managing Expectations.** Participation can risk raising unrealistic expectations which are beyond the expertise or scale of the agency to realistically meet. The IFRC Somalia gave examples of frequent requests for major multi-sector development programmes from local leaders, quite outside the resources or purpose of the organisation. These demands, took considerable time to "negotiate" down to the more realistic parameters of a humanitarian response focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable. Although coordination with other agencies could potentially provide additional capacities, those other agencies may also use different assessment approaches or have different sector priorities or expertise. This can quickly become a complicated situation and, for some, questions the wisdom of attempting detailed participatory approaches before internal or external donor funding is agreed. Conversely, only undertaking fully participatory work after funding has been arranged may reveal needs which fall outside those agreed funding parameters anyway. In both cases, a mismatch of expectations and resources needs careful handling to avoid much wasted effort and strained relationships between agency and affected community.

161. In principle, a transparent two-way participatory dialogue should enable expectations and realistic levels of programming to be levelled and agreed between the affected community and implementing agency. But in reality, this is not always possible. For example, the ICRC in Geneva described the sheer number of complex multi-sector needs which may be gradually "unlocked" by a carefully implemented (highly participative) psycho-social programme. In some cases, the range and complexity of unmet needs expressed by affected communities through such programmes may be beyond the capacity of some agencies to address, as they may cross many sectors of intervention in

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[87] Consultant personal experience, 2009 and 2010

which the agency has no resources or expertise, or they may involve sensitive issues with concerned authorities (such as the fate of the missing) which the agency is unable to intervene on. However, once they have been revealed, it is very difficult to leave such needs unresolved, not least because they may be the very drivers of the psycho social situation which the agency sought to address in the first place.

162. **Coordination.** Where different levels of participation are undertaken by different agencies in the same context, the result can be responses which are very different in content and approach. The subsequent real or perceived imbalances can cause tensions between communities and raise issues of Do No Harm and local protection concerns. Although this risk should not deter from the benefits of taking participative approaches to serve each community as well as possible, it should still be noted that such work can be undermined by other less participative approaches in the same context and this emphasises the importance of coordination between humanitarian agencies and other stakeholders.

163. **Urgency of Intervention.** The frequent necessity of speed in humanitarian response brings the potential risk of agency staff mechanically rolling out standard participatory tools that may have become inappropriate to either the sudden urgency or expanding scale of the intervention. In Sri Lanka in 2006[88], the highly participative community based BRCS post Tsunami recovery programme struggled to adapt to the suddenly changing needs of the same communities when they became displaced by armed conflict. Despite the urgency of mass displacement, the field teams were unable to abandon time-consuming community consultation processes and could only provide a single cash assistance for a minority of newly displaced people, seemingly without being able to prioritise expanding and following up the initial assistance. This inertia occurred despite the organisation actually being adept at cash based mechanisms, and having strongly established relationships to assist the same communities but for different outcomes to the pre- displacement situation.

164. **Genuine Relationships and dialogue.** Interviewees have repeatedly emphasised the importance of genuine relationships and dialogue in participatory approaches, which rely heavily on the abilities and experience of agency staff and which cannot be replaced by rigidly applying pre-existing tools. However, the growing trend of sub-contracting field work to multiple implementing partners increasingly distances the field worker from strategic as well as operational decision-making. This risks maintaining the level of quality of participation itself and how much the voice of the affected community can influence programme decisions at the higher levels.

165. **Understanding Decisions.** However consultative and participatory the process, there remain risks inherent in terms of who makes the final decision on programming. Such risks include the necessary levels of contextual knowledge and expertise both within the agency and the affected community. If the context is such that it compromises trust or distorts perceptions, communities risk taking decisions which may not be to their long term advantage. This can be knowingly done, as survival decisions may take precedence over long-term considerations, even if the community is fully aware that there may be negative long term consequences. Such examples may be choosing short-term food aid as distinct

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[88] Consultant Personal Experience 2006 and 2007

from longer term livelihood inputs which may or may not come to fruition; or bore holes for immediate water supply rather than rehabilitation of traditional sources to sustain pastoralist livelihoods.

166. Communities can also make genuine mistakes and poor decisions as well. Two examples of the same ill informed decisions were noted from Sri Lanka during the review. On both occasions, during livelihood recovery programmes, communities chose a particular superior breed of goat to restock their assets. Being unavailable in the affected area, the agency procured and transported the goats from other regions, but being unsuitable for the terrain, they soon died[89]. It remains unclear whether the community would have made the same choice with their own funds. Although highly conversant with the context and goat rearing in general, this breed had never before been available to them and neither the community nor the agency were aware of the risks.

167. **Remote Control Operations** There are other risks associated with situations where "remote control" programme management is practised because of security and access constraints. In these contexts it is extremely hard to monitor the inclusion of vulnerable groups in receiving aid at all, let alone if representative participation has taken part at any stage or if there is any level of informed choice. The accepted use of third party monitors attempts to balance this risk, but there is still a high likelihood of collusion between groups. The UNHCR survey described to the review team in interviews revealed low beneficiary awareness of the relief items they should be receiving, demonstrates a low level of transparency and communication with the affected population. This is despite the percentage of selected beneficiaries actually assisted being relatively high, at over 90%.

4.3 Potential challenges

168. There are both institutional and contextual challenges to successfully implement participatory approaches. On the institutional side, the wealth of tools, guidelines and organisational policies can be a challenge for operational staff to manage alongside other guidelines such as cluster guidelines and standards as well as cross cutting issues such as gender, DRR, Do No Harm, Conflict Sensitive Approaches and others. The challenge is to empower staff at operational level (often sub-contracted people at a great distance from the influence of agency headquarters) to embrace genuine participatory programming in the time frames they are allowed. The aim must be to avoid participation being reduced to an artificial or "tick box" exercise; indicating for instance that a focus group meeting has been held.

169. **Ongoing or repeated Interventions.** Achieving meaningful participation in contexts of repeated intervention is seemingly a particularly difficult challenge. In these contexts multiple agencies have engaged in repeated relationships with affected populations, sometimes over many years. Some of this work may have been of poor quality and populations may feel let down by previous interventions. They may negatively compare the number of assessments they have been subjected to with the actual

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[89] ALNAP (2003D) Global Study on Consultation and Participation of Disaster-affected Populations, Country Monograph: The Case of Sri Lanka (AL006)

follow up in terms of assistance they finally received. Most of all, affected populations soon realise how to, at best, "second guess" the answers which they feel particular agencies are most likely to response positively to. At worst, as previously described, community leaders may actively manipulate their own populations in an attempt to extract the most personally attractive or personally lucrative arrangement from the humanitarian agency. Non-cohesive populations, such as a combination of well-established people and new arrivals, will usually involve different priorities and the interdependency encouraged through participation can be too demanding to be sustainable.

170. **Sudden Onset.** Sudden on-set emergencies also pose challenges because of the disruption to affected communities, but as the exodus of refugees from Rwanda to Tanzania in 1994 demonstrated that with official administration intact for almost every village, the initial response was at least participative at that level and hence remarkably orderly and organised for the scale of the situation.

171. **Scale.** In many contexts, the challenge of implementing participatory approaches will increase with the scale of the crisis, although this is not automatically the case. In situations where long- term relationships have already been built between humanitarian actors and other stakeholders, a humanitarian response can be much more influenced by, and be inclusive of affected communities themselves, even at some scale. In these situations, well established church or religious networks, a Red Cross or Red Crescent National Society or large community based networks like RSPN in Pakistan or BRAC in Bangladesh can rapidly draw on their pre-existing reach into communities for inclusive response at scale.

172. **Timeframes.** All these processes may take time which is often lacking in the humanitarian project cycle. Apart from challenges between donor and agency, extending the time frames for participation also highlights the constant challenge of maintaining humanitarian staff for long enough time periods to ensure consistent and trusting relationships for participatory approaches to be sustained. In the majority of implementing agencies the turnover for international staff averages between three to nine months. Maintaining relationships with affected populations can be compounded by a declining proportion of international staff in some programmes for many reasons, including restricted humanitarian access, government policy and cost. The resulting increase in sub-contracting national or local NGOs who in turn may work through a range of CBOs may improve staff turnover, but also raises issues of agency proximity to the affected population and maintaining systemic organisational approaches to participation at field level.

173. **Synergy within system-wide Approach.** The strong participatory approaches of some organisations can also be easily undermined by non-participatory work of others, especially if implemented at large scale. For instance a standardised general food distribution of pre-set beneficiary criteria and pre-set rations almost automatically negates against more participatory cash or voucher based responses or livelihood recovery efforts happening in the same context. Pre-decided shelter designs by the shelter cluster have also drawn criticism from a number of respondents with beneficiaries questioning the mandate of the cluster to have such decisions imposed on affected communities themselves. In this way, the architecture of the humanitarian system can inadvertently

undermine participatory approaches, with the challenge being represented by an agreed "basket" or "package' of assistance being implemented across the entire context for reasons of equity. But these top down approaches can exclude otherwise accepted norms of general good practice and participatory approaches and may well exclude the most vulnerable despite being intended to ensure equity.

174. One of the conclusions of the ODI paper on 'system failure'[90] is that there are no punitive mechanisms in place for humanitarian agencies that fail to perform. In some contexts, donors such as DG ECHO simply have a limited choice of partners and responding to the humanitarian imperative may challenge the ability to have the necessary quality criteria met. Donors that support participatory approaches must be ready to allow significant flexibility in their programme agreements, but agencies too need to demonstrate the confidence to persuade donors to help them explore more creative participatory approaches, including in situations where the international system seemingly restricts their opportunities.

175. Many humanitarian agencies face a challenge of meeting the increasing demand for "upward investment" of representation to the clusters and other forums, including the representation needed to gain funding and operational space. This has to be balanced against the minimum level of investment needed at field level to ensure adequate participation of the affected population, where the reality is, despite the wealth of tools available, where "…..*your response is only as good as the one who is face to face with the community.*"[91] In addition, as Norman (2012) reflects; "*Unless senior programme or organisational staff have a strong grasp of the principles of participation and are able to advise on context-specific approaches, there is a risk in remote management that participation will be seen as too complex and will not be prioritised by local staff or project-implementing agencies.*" (2012 pp 61)

176. **Policies of Host Government.** Other challenges include community participation leading to sentiments and decisions that do not fit with the host government policy or priorities. Participation involves letting go a degree of control of the programme to the affected community themselves and this can place the agency in a difficult position. In these situations the role of advocacy becomes important and great sensitivity may be needed to help communities raise and address the issues coherently, while at the same time ensuring Do No Harm. The situation of an impasse could arise with programme delays and new challenges between the humanitarian agency and its agreements with the donor. There are numerous examples of many agencies experiencing serious programme delays in the post conflict return of IDPs to northern Sri Lanka, where government restrictions limited the degree of participation possible with communities. This caused, amongst other issues, frequent challenges to maintain programme relevance and quality as well as for agencies to maintain their donor agreements[92].

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[90] Levine, S. et al. (2011) *System failure? Revisiting the problems of timely response to crises in the Horn of Africa.* London: ODI/HPN (ODI002)
[91] Informant Interview
[92] Consultant Personal Experience 2009 and 2010

177. **Traditional Practices:** Many cultures and traditions advocate sharing resources equally, even if that involves a transfer from the most vulnerable to less vulnerable groups. These factors need considerable attention during participatory work to ensure a set of outcomes which address both agency and affected community priorities. For example, the strength and prevalence of "*solidarite*" in DRC is a well-recognised example of such a mechanism which challenges not the notion of vulnerability but some of the views on how it should be addressed. The BRCS pilot cash transfer programme in Niger[93] also revealed secondary transfers of cash away from identified vulnerable households themselves to support a wide range of self-selected community activities. These included investing in community infrastructure, purchasing donkeys and carts to serve as ambulances, constructing homes for teachers, constructing schools and sharing cash with neighbouring communities. Such a redistribution of resources through larger scale kinship and social networks, while somewhat unexpected, was seen positively, as this process may alleviate potential community tensions and rivalry and reduce 'risk' to the beneficiary.

4.4 Translating lessons into good practice, tools and guidelines

178. <u>Respondents have been unanimous that the development and application of specific tools and guidelines for participation are no guarantee of good practice</u>. Genuine participation of affected communities relies on attitudes and an approach that enables a fundamental shift away from the traditional role of aid agencies as the benefactor. This contrasts with much of the media portrayal of large-scale disasters, such as the Pakistan floods (2010) and the content of international appeals for funds such as those for the Haiti Earthquake (2010). Participation also implies a degree of transfer of responsibility, decision making and programme direction from the agency to the affected community. In reality this is a considerable challenge for many agencies to embrace at an institutional level and to convey in their relationships with donors.

179. Therefore while the humanitarian sector has made great efforts to professionalise through the development of valuable policies, tools, standards and guidelines these do not alone provide the mind-set, skills and experience that genuine participation requires, neither do they provide the necessary organisational commitment, structure or systems . The agency staff who engage with affected populations need sufficient levels of autonomy, decision making power and organisational confidence in their position to be able to deliver effective programmes from the dialogue they have established and from the dignified relationships they have built. The value of tools and guidelines can also be compromised by the frequent requirement to produce immediate quantifiable "results" to answer media, agency or donor demands in high profile crisis. These situations make good practice very difficult to achieve in the short term, and the ability to be participative under such pressures requires particular skill-sets and experience for which there is little coverage in literature or guidance.

180. By its very nature participation can imply using shared skills and capacities to jointly develop a purpose made response, which fits the unique characteristics of every context. Participation focuses on the approach which will bring the most effective outcomes through good practice on both sides.

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[93] http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/resources/casestudies/niger-unconditional-transfers-in-tanout.pdf

This is in contradiction to the present widespread efforts to "roll out" sets of tools and guidelines across many areas of humanitarian endeavour, which are intended to produce good practice as a result. In interviews, an example was given from Sri Lanka, where PRA was implemented as a "mechanical exercise" without respect and empathy for the population. This created hostility and resentment rather than fostering trust and establishing dialogue through participation.

181. There is also a tendency for participation to become regarded as a separate activity, rather than as an approach applicable to many humanitarian activities. For example, after the 2004 Asian Tsunami, Plan International explained that many of their staff who were interviewed after the response, assumed "participation programmes" require preparation, SMART objectives[94], and specific targets. They believed that only specialist trained staff could do this work and yet these same staff members naturally undertook participatory approaches in their usual community based development programmes[95].

182. The review found evidence of good practice in participation across a wide range of agencies, programmes and contexts. But this good practice is almost entirely attributable to the approaches which experienced individual staff has taken and which their agencies have enabled and supported during implementing. In no single instance has a specific tool or guideline been imposed on staff by an agency and there is strong consensus that what may be good practice in one area, may not be in another. Even within one community the same practice may be judged good or bad depending on so many of the contextual factors considered in the previous sections of this report. In Afghanistan in 2010, IRC embedded a participatory study as part of their response, but cautioned against extrapolating from this to other situations recognising that this study reflected just one element of a more complex picture even within this village, let alone the rest of Afghanistan and beyond. A range of examples are provided below, which serve more as approaches for organisations to consider, rather than as set practices to be specifically promoted by DG ECHO or other donors. Each example should only be considered in relation to an appropriate contextual analysis and an agency and response environment which enables a genuine commitment to participation of the affected population.

4.5 Emerging lessons on good practice

183. The findings of this review consistently point to the *approach which is taken* as the key for ensuring better participation of affected populations. In this regard, seemingly any of the plethora of tools and guidance that exist, which positively change the dynamic of the relationship between aid agencies and affected populations is good. Different agencies working in different situations will likely find different and preferred tools most effective for them in achieving this. *Below is a summary of key questions under a 'continuum' of good practice to be considered by humanitarian actors before and*

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[94] Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely

[95] Plan International (2005) *Children and the Tsunami. Engaging with children in disaster response, recovery and risk reduction: Learning from children's participation in the tsunami response*. Bangkok: Plan Ltd (PL001)

during the intervention that points again and again towards the importance of approach above that of specific tools which may become part of that approach.

184. These are presented in a loose continuum of interventions detailed in the following pages and summarised as:

1. Do No Harm
2. Provision of Information
3. Community consultation
4. Mobilising community
5. Selecting beneficiaries
6. Getting it right from the start
7. Maintaining dialogue with the community
8. Using standards flexibly
9. Monitoring leanring and evaluation
10. LRRD and DRR

1. DO NO HARM

Key questions may include:
1. What are the key contextual factors?
2. Who are the stakeholders that need to be involved?
3. What is the profile of the intended communities?
4. What are the possible trigger points for either causing/re-igniting tensions or antagonising community relations or conflict?
5. Could participation have negative consequences for affected communities? Which ones?
6. Could participation have negative consequences for vulnerable groups or individuals within a community? Which ones?

Even before a humanitarian intervention can be considered, it is critical to ensure that any intervention will Do No Harm. There are many contexts where tensions between communities or within communities can be triggered or re-ignited through a humanitarian intervention or even the perception or anticipation of an intervention. This is absolutely critical in most conflict situations, but is also important in natural disaster contexts, where there can be many areas of sensitivity and potential local conflict, such as those involving land rights or territorial control in complex urban settings. Unwanted attention from military forces or rebel groups can seriously threaten entire populations after relief has been provided, and agencies have left; similarly vulnerable groups within affected populations may be targeted by others to take away the assistance they may have received.

Do No Harm requires at the very least, some sort of discrete dialogue with representatives of the affected population and other stakeholders. These may be military or paramilitary groups, other arms carriers, neighbouring communities and communities through which travel may be needed. It is essential that false expectations are not raised, as this could cause tensions in itself, and that the agency is able to gather the necessary basic information to balance the key factors. Do No Harm is an approach which is entirely context

specific. Assurances of Do No Harm may be achieved in minutes or it may take protracted negotiation. Although documented examples are rare, the option remains of withholding humanitarian relief, should certain security provisions not be possible. Or, in the case of Sri Lanka in 2009, a DFID minister stated that no further UK assistance would be provided unless IDPs were allowed to return to their homes in the former conflict affected areas on the north.

This can be a difficult concept to balance with situations of extreme need, but distributions characterised by riots and disorder are unlikely to help the most vulnerable anyway. If the opportunity to provide relief can be agreed to Do No Harm, then the way it is provided needs considered carefully too

Example: One of the most extreme examples dates back to the famine and civil war in Somalia in 1991. The violence and desperation was such that the ICRC was unable to provide food aid without placing desperate people in immediate danger. Any affected person even holding the smallest quantity of saleable food such as rice would be targeted by armed groups. The only practical solution became the twice daily provision of cooked food (rice, beans and oil) to one million people in the biggest logistical operation the organisation has even undertaken to this day. The perishable cooked food has no saleable value, and ensured the most vulnerable received a ration and were not harmed for it. (example from author's own experience, Somalia 1992)

2. PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Key questions may include:

1. What is the best way to communicate with the community?
2. What is the best way to ensure both transparency and the perception of transparency?
3. Which medium or combination of mediums is most affective?
4. What is/how to determine the key information for affected communities?

Information is essential in any context. Even in the most extreme situations, it is a basic requirement of respect, transparency and accountability to ensure that the affected population is aware of key information. Many examples are given in the literature of innovative ways that agencies are ensuring that the community at the very least has adequate information. A BBC World Service Policy Briefing in 2008 entitled *"Left in the Dark; The Unmet need for information in humanitarian responses"*[96] highlights the provision of information as a basic requirement of all responses. For instance, essential information may include; Who the agency is, why it is responding, who/how/why beneficiaries will be selected or not selected, what provision is suggested and its use, how that will be provided/accessed, and who the affected population can turn to for information, advice, representation, feedback or complaints. It would also not be unreasonable that the affected population is informed of what follow up activities may be expected from this and other organisations. In situations of extreme need, it may be very important for the affected population to be aware that an agency is coordinating with other organisations and the concerned authorities, and there are frequently issues of security and post distribution issues which communities may be anxious about, and potential issues of Do No Harm which they may identify.

Experience shows that a range of initiatives (using both new and traditional means) is generally the most effective for reaching the majority of the population. Depending on appropriateness to the context, this may include megaphones, posters, pictorial or written leaflets, local or national radio, SMS messaging, community facilitators and the use of oral traditions through elders. If possible, full community meetings to brief everyone on what is decided can be valuable, and give the opportunity for disputes to be raised, either at the meeting, or often more appropriately in a more private way afterwards.

Example: In interviews, the former IFRC Relief Coordinator explained how in the 2010 Haiti Earthquake, the IFRC and Haitian Red Cross actually used two teams for every distribution[97]. One team worked entirely on information provision and acted as focal point for the affected community, while the other team worked on the distribution itself. If the situation became difficult, the information team could help re- establish order, or if a distribution had to be halted or postponed, the information team would return to sensitise the population and ensure calm, ahead of the distribution team returning. Information provision was provided through a combination of more traditional mechanisms (face to face meetings, announcements through megaphones, leaflets) and new approaches (information and questions slots on community radio, SMS messaging)

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[96] BBC World Service Trust (2008) Left in the Dark: The unmet need for information in humanitarian responses. Policy Briefing (WST001)
[97] See IRFC Case Study Examples in annex <<X>> (Daniel Bolanos)

3. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Key questions may include:

1. How best to conduct the needs assessment?
2. How to ensure inclusion of vulnerable elements in consultation with the traditional leadership?
3. What timeframe available for consultation at this stage?
4. What form should the consultations take?
5. What are the changes people want to see, and how can these be prioritised and sequenced?
6. What are the potential protection issues posed by the programme?

Having established and built a dialogue on the two way provision of information, a more consultative relationship would be a natural step in many contexts. The challenge of ensuring inclusion requires careful consideration of how the affected community is represented, by for instance its traditional leaders or elders. These leaders often represent a good entry point, but any subsequent focus group, household or individual discussions should be disaggregated across the different stakeholders and the various layers within each group. The social norms in many societies reinforce discrimination and even speaking with some groups, such as women, minority groups or neighbouring communities, may not be seen as appropriate. A particular challenge is often that of engaging with youth who are often put together under women groups as part of a gender based approach, although this may not always be ideal. It may take time to build sufficient trust to have some groups accepted in consultation. Transparency is very important, and affected communities need to have as realistic expectations of agency capacity, as the agency has of the community's vulnerabilities and capacities. Much of the more recent literature covering consultation is actually focused on beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms. This marks a move away from the emphasis on "upward accountability" to donors which focussed on quantifiable outputs, towards hearing the voice of affected communities and how they perceive the less quantifiable outcomes of the intervention. Some of this was in reaction to the common criticism of the global tsunami response that focus was on upward accountability.

Examples: The ECB guide provides a practical guide to project staff ensuring inpact measurement and accountability throughout their programmes in emergencies including practical tools such as: 'Involve People'; 'Profile The People'; 'Identify Changes People Want to See'; 'Track Changes'; 'Make Feedback a two way Process' and 'Use Feedback to Improve Impact'.

Community feedback and complaint mechanisms are sen by HAP as a minimum in terms of accountability, and agencies use a number of tools to try to achieve this. The HAP report "To Complain or Not Complain" used beneficiary based consultation methodology in three countries, asking beneficiaries directly about sexual exploitation and abuse by aid agencies.

In Northern Kenya, Oxfam developed a log to be kept with the community that ensured that the community could keep track of any decisions or actions agreed with any visitor/staff agency member. In Marsabit, also in Kenya, Tearfund established Beneficiary Reference Groups (BGRs) as a key participatory tool.

As a result of accountability self assessment undertaken by Concern Worldwide during the Bangladesh Cyclone Sidr response (2008), the agency increased its partner capacity and instituted Community Monitoring Committees (CMCs) and complaints handling mechanisms.

Oxfam introduced accountability into its 2010 flood response in India which included the following procedures:

A document was signed off with the village leaders indicating the distribution details. Selection of beneficiaries was fair and transparent overall (directed by Village leaders) Oxfam used and followed and existing in built accountability system with the communities. The monitoring and house to house visiting also tracked the distribution of goods – much of which was done by the community

4. MOBILISING COMMUNITY

Key questions may include:
1. What local knowledge/expertise/resources can be drawn on?
2. What level of decision making is it realistic (fair) to expect from affected communities at this stage? (Have psycho social/trauma issues been fully taken into account?)
3. Has the opportunity cost of mobilising communities been taken account of (time/resources)?
4. What community structures are in place already?

By mobilising the community, the value of their assets and knowledge start to contribute very tangibly to programme delivery, and responsibility starts to be shared in reaching the programme goals. Traditionally, community mobilisation involved the provision of labour (either free or food/cash for work), and local resources (such as aggregates and building materials) as the community's contribution to the programme. However, not only are there opportunity costs which struggling communities may have to absorb to make their labour, time and resources available, but most communities are in a position where they can take more responsibility than just making pre agreed contributions. The ideal approach of enabling communities to develop their own vision and to elaborate this in a bespoke Community Action Plan, then provides a wider strategic framework in which the humanitarian programme can fit, rather than the other way around. Other humanitarian agencies which arrive in the location should rather engage with community to contribute to their plan, rather than make communities fit into humanitarian agency priorities. This approach also provides excellent synergy with LRRD and DRR initiatives. It should be noted that in their action plan, communities may prioritise and sequence activities and standards very differently to the leadership of the international humanitarian community.

Example: From Muslim Aid[98]
To carry out the shelter project Muslim Aid adopted a community managed programme approach in order to: 1. Empower beneficiary groups, as well as the community. 2. Ensure quality of the work through the beneficiary. 3. Arrange safe custody of construction materials by the community. 4. Build ownership of the project. 5. Develop an example of community as opposed to agency managed programmes for Bangladesh

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[98] http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/ma-participation-in-shelter-project-from-design-to-implementation-and-monitoring.pdf (HAP011)

5. SELECTING BENEFICIARIES

Key questions may include:

1. What selection approach is the most appropriate (criteria/community based targeting)?
2. Who represents the community in determining vulnerability?
3. Who are the most excluded in the community and how can they be reached?
4. How can safe dialogue and assistance be assured with the most vulnerable?

This is arguably the least developed area in rapid response situations. ACAPs[99] states that "needs assessments is at the core of the humanitarian agenda …." But that "no commonly accepted methodology exists within the humanitarian system…..and remains the biggest outstanding challenge to the humanitarian community." In the Technical Brief (2011, pp 3)[100] ACAPs outlines a Phase Two Purposive Sampling and Site Collection tool that builds on the secondary data collection of phase one with the objective of gaining the perspective of beneficiaries on their priority needs.   The HC for Somalia (interviewed in February 2012) explained that needs assessment which comes up through the clusters is far from ideal, and poses considerable inter cluster and cross cluster coordination challenges. Initiatives such as MIRA[101] seek to address these concerns, but being based primarily on secondary data collection, they also tend to focus attention on the needs of servicing the international humanitarian system rather than on investing in participation at the level of affected communities themselves. In Multi Cluster/sector initial rapid assessments *"secondary data plays a crucial role in the early stages of emergencies when collecting primary data is challenged by human resource, time and access constraints."*[102] The Fritz Institute paper "Surviving the Pakistan Earthquake; Perceptions of the affected one year later"[103] found minimal consultation even with those who were most affected. 98% of households said they had had no input into the decision making processes related to livelihoods, shelter and 97% for food assistance."

Transferring responsibility for selecting beneficiaries to the affected community itself is an increasingly widespread approach. The criteria chosen for inclusion in relief assistance is usually far more needs based and context-sensitive than traditional agency-derived criteria or government imposed criteria used to be. Benefits include accountability, transparency and participation. However, there are also examples where errors of exclusion and inclusion can lead to a programme being; *"…communally divisive, fraught with logistical difficulties and power relations, politically difficult, open to manipulation and potentially cutting across positive community coping strategies"*[104]. Therefore an adequate understanding of social dynamics is essential, as is a transparent process for disseminating the list of beneficiaries with an additional process to ensure any complaints as to their selection are effectively dealt with.

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[99] http://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9547689.pdf
[100] http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/purposive-sampling-and-site-selection-purposive-sampling-and-site-selection.pdf
[101] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-documents-default&bodyID=75&publish=
[102] Pp 6 The Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Approach: Process, Methodologies and Tools (IASC007)
[103] http://www.fritzinstitute.org/PDFs/findings/PakistanEarthquake_Perceptions.pdf
[104] Oxfam/Concern Worldwide (2010) Walking the Talk: Cash Transfers and Gender Dynamics (OXF015)

Example: WFP Horn of Africa drought response 2011 used this approach exclusively in Kenya; Horn Relief developed the Inclusive Community Based Targeting (ICBT) in 2003 to ensure proper targeting for cash based responses. An external post –distribution monitoring survey conducted by OCHA of one of Horn Relief's cash-based projects using this approach indicated that 97% of the targeted beneficiaries were in fact the most vulnerable. (Horn Relief 2007) The ICBT emphasizes transparency, empowerment, gender awareness, and community participation as key principles of effective targeting (for DG ECHO) Horn relief (2007)[105]

6. GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

Key questions may include:

1.   Ensuring How can partners ensure that agency representation/staff is impartial in relations with affected communities?
2.   How can partners ensure Ensuring that the most vulnerable in the community are being heard/represented?
3.   Are negative consequences immediately recognised and addressed ?Making sure negative consequences are immediately recognised and addressed?

Interlocutors have repeatedly emphasised the importance of taking participatory approaches very seriously from the very start. Mistakes or oversights made in the first hours of a response can have long term repercussions which are often very difficult to reverse.

Example: An interview example was given in Somalia where the community prioritisation of maintaining clan balances in the recruitment of health staff came ahead of consideration of medical skills or qualifications. Refusing to recruit unsuitable personnel but acknowledging the tensions, the agency went to great lengths to emphasise the importance of proper service provision to all clans, and used a visiting recruitment panels from a distant area to select only the most competent candidates. Respecting the process and impartiality of the recruitment process, all clans eventually accepted the candidates who were subsequently employed. Establishing the agreed process took time, but the consequences of not doing so would have seriously compromised the programme delivery, and would have been extremely sensitive and costly to reverse.

7. MAINTAINING DIALOGUE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Key questions may include:

1.   What channels/combinations of communication are possible/most effective?
2.   What system within the agency enables it to listen to what it hears and respond appropriately?
3.   Does feedback enable changes/improvement in the programme where appropriate?

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[105] http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/erd-3621-full.pdf

Continual dialogue and engagement with affected communities, as well as participatory monitoring and cross checking is essential to truly undertake a participative approach. The context or internal dynamics in an affected population may change through the life of the programme, and at any time new actors and new programmes may arrive in the area, with potentially positive or negative effects. Maintaining dialogue on these and many other issues may include feedback and complaints mechanisms, and new beneficiary voice initiatives such as crowd sourcing or initiatives such as Infoasaid which feed messages rapidly back to affected communities. However, the ultimate value of the dialogue must be realised by the ability to make the necessary programme adjustments from the information provided. The prioritisation of humanitarian agency resources should increasingly shift from the actual implementation of programmes towards enabling feedback, flexibility, monitoring, evaluation and learning, with programme implementation increasingly being undertaken by the affected community itself.

Example: A good example is provided by Tearfund, which ensures its top management hears directly from the beneficiaries themselves, through its *"Quarterly accountability reports for DMT programmes which are shared with the Executive Directors, to ensure direct feedback from disaster affected communities reaches the highest level of management on a regular basis."* <<REFTearfund>>

8. USING STANDARDS FLEXIBLY

Key questions may include:
1. What is current practice or is there a baseline for this area of need?
2. What can community salvage/use local materials / resources / knowledge / practice to complement agency input?
3. Does achieving standards for one affected group compromise achieving equity for a wider population?

Standards have great potential value in ensuring appropriateness and equity of response, but participation may bring other ways of meeting those standards than simply through external provision. Communities may have resources of their own which can be drawn on, such as salvaged materials and assets, which may potentially release relief funds to meet other needs. In cash based interventions, the affected community may provide invaluable advise on the need and appropriateness of cash as a response, but it is also important to ensure standardised amounts of cash are provided within the various mechanisms assisting other neighbouring communities to avoid local tensions and disputes. A wider understanding and knowledge of standards also help reduce unrealistic expectations and help orientate the aspirations of affected communities within realistic parameters of agency capacity and resources.

Example: An interview informant gave the following example of the Haiti earthquake (2010), where the shelter cluster was criticised by some affected populations for "imposing" an external standard size of transitional shelter and not taking account of what people had been able to salvage. The value of distributing partly unnecessary shelter materials could have been used for other priorities if choices could have been made, although not every household has access to the same salvaged assets.

9. MONITORING EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Key questions may include:

1. How to ensure that community views are best represented in monitoring and evaluation?
2. How can community comment on the appropriateness of aid and effectiveness of its provision?
3. What institutional learning is needed to address the issues that are provided by affected representative community feedback?
4. How can these lessons be institutionalised to enable good practice for future operations?

There is wide consensus in the value of involving affected communities in both the monitoring and evaluation and in sustained institutional learning. The practice of involving affected communities is also growing in real-time evaluations, highlighted by DARA as *"an evaluation which provides immediate feedback in a participative way to those executing and managing the response."*[106] This links in with the challenge of measuring impact of interventions and "recognizes that local people are capable of identifying and measuring their own indicators of change (Catley 1999). John Borton, writing in the HAP Humanitarian Accountability Report 2008[107] highlights that evaluations do not systematically gather beneficiary views although he noted an increase focus in presenting participation, this is supported by the State of the Humanitarian System (ALNAP 2010)[108] which noted that evaluations still too rarely make systematic attempts to gather beneficiary views. (p.41)

Feinstein's Participatory Impact Assessment (an extension of Participatory Rural Appraisal PRA)[109] was one of several tools developed in order to guide practitioners on an approach to measure impact of livelihood interventions in humanitarian responses that is based on an eight stage approach. Alongside these tools, the recent developments in mass communication and beneficiary voice initiatives present considerable opportunities, but may have a tendency to draw feedback up to the level of the international system on issues which may be better addressed at community level, directly with the agency concerned.

In terms of organisational learning, feedback from affected populations is very powerful if it becomes available throughout an organisation and has commitment at senior levels of management.

Example: HPN. Humanitarian Exchange Number 52, October 2011 Gregory Gleed, HAP International. "Perspectives of the Haiti earthquake response"[110]

"The most pervasive problems identified during the research related to information sharing, participation and complaints handling. Overall, agencies that employed an integrated approach to communicating and engaging with disaster-affected communities were viewed more positively by beneficiaries than those that did not. ....In some locations, FGD (Focus Group Discussion) participants said that agencies had held consultations with the wider community, not just the camp committee. In these locations, the community felt involved in the work agencies were doing and were positive about them."

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[106] http://daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Alnap_presentation_RTE.pdf

[107] Borton (2008 pp 26) Humanitarian Accountability Report (HAP)

[108] Harvey, P et al (2010) The State of the humanitarian system assessing performance and progress a pilot study ALNAP

[109] Catley, A. et al (2008) *Participatory Impact Assessment: A Guide for Practitioners.* Feinstein International Center. Tufts University (FIC001)

[110] http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-52/local-perspectives-haiti-earthquake-response

10. LRRD AND DRR

Key questions may include:

1. Could or does this programme additionally address any of the root causes driving vulnerability in this affected community?
2. Are there any institutions/local organisations that are being or could be strengthened through this programme?
3. Does this intervention leave a more cohesive, equitable community that is better able to advocate for itself?
4. Does more effective advocacy by the affected community itself (for example with civil administration) have a role in the sustainability or exit strategy of this intervention?

Although humanitarian programmes are implemented primarily to respond to unmet needs, there are frequently many areas of close synergy with the aims of DRR and LRRD approaches, and a number of aims which may be met as a bi product of the intervention. Well implemented humanitarian programmes may often strengthen resilience and disaster risk reduction at community level, and start to touch on longer term causes of underlying vulnerability. Furthermore, stronger, more equitable, more resilient communities are better able to advocate for themselves, and be better positioned to benefit from longer term recovery and development initiatives.

Example: *"In consultations, children were given the opportunity to discuss how they and their communities can be better prepared for future disasters, including tsunamis. They are very aware of the risks but are also convinced that more lives can be saved if they are prepared. …. Their extensive idea on preparedness include the development of warning systems, efficient evacuation plans and families having an awareness of potential disasters, with common medicines and important documents on hand. Some of their ideas link to environmental sustainability and the reduction of risk through appropriate construction methods, planting of trees and protecting the mangroves. Children's consideration of protection includes older people, younger children, disabled people and minority groups; and their ideas about saving to be prepared for future disasters suggest a natural resilience that should be encouraged."* [111]

4.6 Looking Forward - a changing global environment

186. Over the last decade, a series of often very large and particularly challenging humanitarian contexts have repeatedly stretched the international humanitarian system to its practical limits. The scale of the twin 2010 disasters of the Haiti earthquake and Pakistan floods were unprecedented in recent times. But even these tragic events still need to be seen in the context of some 70% of humanitarian work been in response to the constant, on-going demands of chronic or protracted

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[111] Plan International (2005) *Children and the Tsunami. Engaging with children in disaster response, recovery and risk reduction: Learning from children's participation in the tsunami response*. Bangkok: Plan Ltd (PL001)

situations, such as that in Somalia in 2011/12. Looking forward, a combination of urbanisation, environmental degradation and the apparent effects of climate change are significant factors leading to the predication that by 2015 some 375 million people will be affected by climate-related disasters every year while other 'rapid-onset' emergencies and the impact of conflict will affect many more. In some contexts, a combination of vulnerability factors and population growth may result in entire regions becoming particularly exposed to hazard risk over the next 30 years. These risks affect areas where not only vast numbers of the world's population live, but where some of the highest levels of global food production takes place. Present models of agricultural production, varieties and practices are already too inflexible to underwrite local and global food security in some areas, and this may increase to affect global markets in the future.

187. An increasing risk of epidemics and pandemics reflects a combination of new forms of existing infectious agents (such as influenza), and more recent ones (such as the HIV and Ebola viruses). The post-earthquake cholera outbreak in Haiti emphasises how rising global health threats can be exacerbated by poverty as well as disaster situations. Specific hazard-risks presented by technological developments are also likely to increase. Although this includes the risks posed by new technological facilities in poorly regulated contexts, the 2011 Japan earthquake and Tsunami demonstrates that even the most seemingly resilient countries are still vulnerable to hazard risk. The pattern of decreasing humanitarian space in increasingly restricted and/or insecure contexts may also continue in the future, posing particular dilemmas in providing humanitarian aid. This combination of factors led Lord (Paddy) Ashdown of the UK to express the following view; "*We are caught in a race between the growing size of the humanitarian challenge, and our ability to cope; between humanity and catastrophe. And, at present, this is not a race we are winning.*"[112]

188. In response to many of these challenges the funding and capacity of the humanitarian sector has grown rapidly over the last decade to reach $15.1 billion in 2009 and over 210,000 aid worker staff across the three humanitarian pillars today. By 2007, NGOs accounted for one third of total humanitarian assistance spending with budgets of major agencies exceeding that of some nation states. New actors in the humanitarian sphere include the "BRIC" (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries and emerging Islamic donors which have joined a complex group of non-OECD donors. Some of these states have been supporting international development programmes and systems for longer and with larger aid budgets than certain OECD donors. There are also other growth areas such as the private sector and military-humanitarian contributions, which bring an increasingly complex set of relationships with and between a range of key actors.

189. The ever growing level of potential needs and the increasingly complex sets of stakeholder both hint at the requirement for greater participation, beneficiary voice and accountability, but against a humanitarian backdrop which poses many challenges to effective participation. Many of these new

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[112] Ashdown, P (2011) *Humanitarian Emergency Response Review*. London: DFID (DFID003)

actors openly support humanitarian approaches which are different to that embodied by the formal international humanitarian assistance, often preferring to see themselves as long term development partners with privileged bi-lateral relationships. They may also be less likely to be preoccupied with adhering to existing standards, norms, principles and notions of good practice.

190. The 2005 OCHA Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) launched a reform process seeking to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnership. From this, new initiatives arose including the cluster approach and new financing instruments such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and country level Humanitarian Response Funds (HRFs). There have been some positive outcomes, but in December 2011, *"in light of the growing recognition of the weaknesses in the multilateral humanitarian response"* the IASC Principals decided to review the current approach to humanitarian response and make appropriate adjustments. The ensuing "Transformative Agenda" of 2012 seeks to make a "substantial improvement" to the current humanitarian response system, including in areas of leadership, coordination, strategic planning, and accountability[113].

191. But from the operational level interviews undertaken as part of this review respondents repeatedly referred to a contradiction between these multi-million dollar "upward" investments in the formal humanitarian system and a future which for them increasingly focuses on local capacities, national and community ownership and taking responsibility at the lowest level (subsidiarity). Instead of a dominant international system emerging from today's changes, operational actors are seemingly envisioning a future where local organisations undertake the majority of preparedness and response, but draw on additional specialist (external) capacities as needed.

192. This view fits more closely with much of the recent progress made in DRR centring around the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015[114]. States, regional and international organizations and other actors are urged to implement the five priorities of the framework. The focus is increasingly on the legally recognised role of national governments in preparing for and responding to disasters. This is also reflected in the development of International Disaster Response Law (IDRL). While this is positive, there are nonetheless concerns, especially regarding how respect for the sovereign role of the state and the Paris Declaration commitments to ownership and alignment, can be reconciled with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence in difficult contexts. Humanitarian actors such as field based teams of NGOs and CBOs, and branches of Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies fall right in the middle of these divides between affected communities and state actors on the one hand and international mechanisms and systems on the other. For these organisations the use of participatory approaches will have increasing value if these can be combined with establishing long-term relationships in building resilience and DRR, maintaining proximity to the affected population and ensuring humanitarian access even in difficult times.

193. Meanwhile, needs assessment is also recognised as a persistent weakness within the formal humanitarian system although recent progress has been made. This includes the development of new

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[113] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-template-default&bd=87
[114] http://www.unisdr.org/2005/wcdr/intergover/official-doc/L-docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf

tools, joint and coordinated methodologies, including through the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force[115] (NATF), the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS)[116] and the Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA[117]). But much of this work focuses on the analysis of secondary data and sources to guide the higher levels of decision making in the formal international system. It is in the field based participatory approaches that investment could also be considered, not only for ensuring the appropriateness of interventions and respecting beneficiary views, but also for operational reasons. More complex environments have restricted the operation of the formal humanitarian system in recent years and these situations are likely to grow as different and potentially more assertive states become affected by disasters. For example, the Tripartite Core Group (TCG)[118] mechanism in Myanmar provided an innovative and effective alternative to the international system in response to the 2008 Cyclone Nargis. As more complex, insecure and difficult to access contexts develop in the future, more flexible and discrete approaches for both assessment and coordination may be needed, which offer both opportunities and constraints to participation.

194. In the 70% of contexts which are repeated or chronic emergency situations, agencies have admitted to locking themselves into modes of operation which no longer best address needs and into operational modalities which donors do not necessarily want either. The transactional costs of maintaining flexibility and changing the methods of delivery through long programme runs can be prohibitive. Creativity is often lacking in situations where "off the shelf" standardised responses with quantifiable indicators can become so much the norm for the majority of agencies that there is little motivation to look again at the situation in a more participative way with more qualitative indicators of success.

195. The increase in longer term social safety net programmes, such as those in east Africa, offer sound alternatives to traditional humanitarian measures such as food aid by providing cash provision instead. But securing the next step of sustainably addressing the widespread root causes of unsustainable livelihoods seems a long way distant. If the ultimate result of today's programming becomes increasing rural-urban migration, then these growing urban contexts place particular challenges for humanitarian organisations. Participation is an essential component of preparing for and responding to urban needs, but while one NGO met in the review specialised in this area, another NGO representative admitted that he had "no idea" how to undertake participation in urban humanitarian response.

196. There are however two areas of focus in the formal system which will increasingly encourage investment "*downstream*" and provide further support for participative approaches. Firstly, the present enthusiasm for cash-based responses may tend to overlook some of the potential shortcomings in certain contexts, and not necessarily address root causes, but nonetheless almost by default cash responses encourage more participative approaches. The responsibility transfer from

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[115] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-subsidi-common-default&sb=75
[116] http://www.acaps.org/
[117] http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/pageloader.aspx?page=content-documents-default&bodyID=75&publish=
[118] http://www.asean.org/21691.htm

agency to the affected population, the necessary capacity of local markets, and necessity to more carefully assess the potential impact of cash based approaches with a wider range of stakeholders are all positive. Even where cash programmes are not the most appropriate, an increase in monitoring and evaluation will more easily reveal what the better alternatives or combinations of cash and non-cash approaches may be most suitable as contexts change and develop. At the present time, the 2011 Somalia response was the largest cash intervention of the international system to date. It has been widely appreciated by donors such as USAID, which regard it as being the most effective way to minimise risk, and according to the Transparency International study was the intervention most appreciated by the beneficiaries[119].

197. Secondly, the rapid developments in information and communications technology represent further significant changes ahead. This is not only for the implementation of programmes, such as cash based programmes, but also for information and feedback from affected communities. The opportunities range from mass communication and information campaigns through to individual communications through SMS (Short Message Service or 'Text messages'). The challenges of managing the sheer size of potential information flows and the vulnerability of these systems to manipulation, exclusion and misrepresentation are considerable, but in general terms would seemingly point towards greater beneficiary voice and accountability to those who previously were unable to be represented. In the final analysis sound inclusive and representative participation undertaken directly with communities will not be replaced by new means of communication. But these methods will nonetheless serve to highlight where participation has not been sufficient and this in itself will be positive in the long term.

5. Conclusions

198. There is almost unanimous opinion in humanitarian organisations that properly implemented participation of disaster affected communities brings significant benefits. These include addressing issues of Do No Harm, protection, human rights, inclusion, equity, dignity and the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian programmes. Participation also supports and provides natural links to DRR and LRRD in many contexts. There are however, a number of potential risks which need to be considered, including those associated with context analysis, the traditions and customs of leadership, working at scale and managing flexibility and expectations.

5.1 Policy

C.1 Humanitarian donors are increasingly supporting participatory approaches. This is reflected in the many new humanitarian policies developed in the last two or three years, which largely embrace existing Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) guidance on participation. The recent example of the AUSAID Humanitarian Aid Policy (2011), states that humanitarian assistance: "***requires** the active participation of people affected by disaster in order to be effective.*" (pp 49)

119

http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases_nc/2012/2012_03_21_tikenya_food_assistance_integrity_study

C.2 Almost without exception, major donors maintain responsibility for DRR within their humanitarian departments or units and this also encourages a growing linkage and synergy between humanitarian action and the types of participation already more intrinsic in longer term DRR programming. Major donors such as OFDA, DG ECHO and DFID all demonstrate clear policy links between humanitarian intervention, DRR programming, and accountability to beneficiaries, which frequently refer to participation as part of the means to achieve these objectives.

C.3 The ALNAP case studies and guidelines from a decade ago support this opinion, and yet according to "The State of the Humanitarian System" (2010) and latest evaluations such as those undertaken by DARA in Somalia, there still remains much to be done[120]. The importance of participation has been highlighted going back even as far as the mid-1980s, but the prioritisation of dialogue from the start still remains elusive or at best "patchy" in much of today's humanitarian work. (R2)

C.4 Defining what an organisation means by participation is not necessarily straightforward. Within broad definitions, some agencies focus on more precise areas, which reflect their organisational priorities, others regard participation as equating to "inclusion", a step towards "partnership", or as a series of steps where the "process" is as important as the end result. "Rights-based" approaches also fall within the same broader definitions, as do considerations of good management practice, the identification of key stakeholders and where in the programme cycle participation should take place. For the purposes of this review, a simplified definition is suggested: *"Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them"*

C.5 Despite policy level support for participation, systemic issues actively mitigate against it. Although some 70% of emergency situations are chronic or protracted emergences, the international humanitarian system is mostly aligned to responding to the 30% of situations which are sudden onset emergencies. This approach is characterised by short term planning cycles, Community Action Plans (CAPs); quantifiable measures for donor funding requirements and demonstrating Value for Money (VFM) and "upward accountability" to the HC/IASC led system. This situation detracts from making investment in participation with affected communities themselves in any context and ensuring accountability to them rather than "the system" itself. Additionally, emergency response approaches to protracted or chronic situations miss the potential opportunities available for more effective participation of affected communities, and more appropriate programming as a result. (R2)

C.6 This "policy-practice gap" increasingly pushes risk and responsibility for promoting participation downwards through the system. The increasing amount of work subcontracted to CBOs and local NGOs by larger humanitarian organisations indicates a reduction in the number of policy-aware staff engaging with the local partners who actually work with affected communities. The current system is

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[120] http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HRI2011_Focus_on_somalia_0.pdf (DA014)

like the sand in an egg-timer, with policy directives and feedback from affected communities passing in opposite directions through a staff-constrained middle. It remains a huge challenge to being able to operationalize all the policies, standards, guidelines and codes, and another challenge for the agency to be able to react effectively and flexibly to the participatory feedback it receives. (R7)

C.7 Without more effective means to ensure policy is informed by practice, and that practitioners are better aware of policy, the risk is that participation becomes reduced to a box-ticking exercise, to demonstrate in reports that "participation has been done." This is particularly concerning as participation is not a stand-alone activity, but an entire approach with many potential benefits. (R11)

5.2 Operational

C.8 There are many factors which affect the opportunities for participation, and the benefits it can have. But context overrides all other factors and will ultimately determine which tools and approaches will be most appropriate in each situation.

C.9 In principle, and context allowing, participation of affected communities is appropriate throughout the project cycle, and across most protection and assistance activities. The only restriction is where the context requires caution, such as where potential protection or Do No Harm concerns may be priority. (R4)

C.10 The literature on participation is extensive, and covers a vast range of methodologies, tools, standards, and guidelines. These resources are relevant, coherent with each other, and necessary to support policy with practical measures. Standards are important for affected communities to be aware of, as even if not attained in non-disaster times, they are still realistic targets to aim for in recovery activities. But the more important organisational challenge is to effectively embrace an institutional approach to participation. Participation is frequently regarded as being more of a "state of mind" than simply the rigorous application of tools or methodology. (R7)

C.11 Taking sector or cluster approaches to participation is not particularly helpful unless very well timed and coordinated. Most issues revealed through participatory approaches are naturally multi-sector or cross-sectoral and while they may be addressed through coordinated interventions, they are usually not best assessed through a single sector lens.

C.12 The cross cutting areas of Gender and Protection are significant however. Participation has particular importance in revealing and addressing gender based exclusion and vulnerabilities and a broad range of other exclusion and protection issues concerning other vulnerable groups. There can be potential risks in terms of Do No Harm in touching on such issues in certain contexts, and there are also potential opportunities, as women, for example, frequently enable successful participatory programmes. (R4, R7)

C.13 The development of cash based responses, new types of information technology (in accountability and feedback mechanisms and RTEs) and increasing synergy between humanitarian interventions and DRR/LRRD work will all naturally tend to encourage participation with affected populations in the future.

C.14 This increased flexibility in <u>beneficiary choice, and availability of rapid feed-back is likely to improve "downward" accountability to affected communities.</u> This may encourage agencies to re-orientate their Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation to better meet their organisational obligations to affected communities themselves.

C.15 Participation which enables more cohesive, more inclusive communities which are better able to represent themselves <u>encourages advocacy to the concerned authorities and natural LRRD approaches to address longer term root causes than humanitarian response. (R5, R6)</u>

C.16 One of the most significant factors determining the level of participation in a context is that of <u>an agency having a pre-existing relationship with the affected community or working through CBOs or Local NGOs who already have this relationship.</u> Conversely, in a sudden onset event which takes place for the first time in a context where agencies have not worked before, then participation is more challenging. In these situations a strong organisational approach to participation is critical for participation to start from the outset. (R6)

C.17 <u>Human resources play a critical role in the approach to participation; and yet there are limited guidelines in the literature.</u> People in Aid aims to ensure professional standards in the humanitarian sector but outside this initiative the human resource focus remains on technical qualifications rather than attitude or communication skills. Compounding this, the short term cycles of funding are not conducive to staff retention, resulting in agencies offering repeated back-to back short term contracts for key staff members. This leads to high turn- over, and lack of long term investment in staff in terms of training and development. <u>The increasing number of "remote management" humanitarian programmes places new demands and requirements on staff at field level,</u> who are often working discretely and with minimal or distant organisational support. These are areas where participation is anyway extremely difficult to achieve in an inclusive way and situations where staff training and development is particularly relevant to encourage best practice. (R10)

5.3 DG ECHO

C.18 DG ECHO programme documentation and feedback from TAs and other interlocutors demonstrates <u>a positive and growing synergy between humanitarian programming and DIPECHO and Regional Drought Decision (RDD) programmes.</u> (R3, R5, R6)

C.19 <u>DIPECHO programmes and the RDD demonstrate considerable good practice</u> in participation of affected populations, although the scale of DIPECHO programmes is considerably smaller than DG ECHO humanitarian interventions. (R3, R5, R6)

C.20 <u>Participation requires a degree of flexibility between agency and affected population and between agency and donor, which DG ECHO demonstrates</u> in its relationships between TAs and implementing partners. Bureaucratic requirements can generally be overcome by these positive relationships. (R3, R4, R8, R12)

C.21 DG ECHO Primary Emergency Decisions (1 to 3 months grants) and Emergency Decisions (6 month grants) might be expected to include participatory approaches, typically covering contexts of natural disasters (such as cyclones, earthquakes and floods) as well as, for example, sudden population movements triggered by conflict. But in reality, in large scale emergencies the pressures of the international humanitarian system, compounded by shocking media images often puts a huge pressure on agencies to rapidly respond, encouraging "traditional" supply-driven responses. Recent developments in new mass communications initiatives is beginning to gather increasing evidence that this is rarely appropriate, but DG ECHO and other donors often have a limited number of operational partners to support. (R6, R7. R8.R9)

C.22 DG ECHO Ad hoc or World Wide decisions for funding complex emergencies also largely use the same 'rule set' as above; even if an agency receives consecutive funding for the same programme for several years. In many of the on-going crisis such as those in Somalia, DRC, and Darfur, agencies and donors are locked into repeated 6 to 12 month cycles. These short planning horizons do not encourage innovation or creativity, and because of a "predictable unpredictability" limit the potential value of what could be long term participative relationships. (R9)

C.23 DG ECHO programmes are not strongly orientated towards supporting the development of Human Resources in ensuring good practice in participation, or in capacity building of partner organisations and "downward" training to field level. (R10, R11, R12)

C.24 DG ECHO has good examples, provided informally by TAs, where it has funded needs assessments ahead of predictable crises to enable the necessary relationships and context analysis to be developed for a more participative rapid response. These instances should be further enabled where appropriate (R9)

C.26 DG ECHO support to the WASH cluster to ensure a wider participation and sharing of responsibilities across all WASH partner agencies is appreciated and meets a genuine need.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Policy

R.1 DG ECHO should agree the following institutional definition of participation; *"Participation is establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them"*

R.2 DG ECHO should agree to encouraging participation in its humanitarian work as a policy decision and promote this stance with other major stakeholders through advocacy in donor groups such as GHD and humanitarian agency donor support groups.

R.3 DG ECHO should ensure its programme documentation embraces the importance of engaging the affected population in dialogue at all levels, as appropriate to the context. This would include;

Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA's), the Single Form; funding guidelines; documentation covering financing decisions; existing policies.

R.4 DG ECHO should place greater significance on its monitoring guidelines and ToR for reviews and evaluations to include further perspectives of beneficiaries and the wider affected population where at all possible and should encourage RTEs as a way of maximising the feedback from the beneficiary voice and affected population

6.2 Operational

R.5 DG ECHO should continue to develop the already growing synergy and coherence between its funding instruments (DIPECHO/ECHO/RDD) for stronger more predictable humanitarian responses which encourage participatory approaches. The existing use of DIPECHO or other preparedness and resilience decisions such as the RDD in areas of repeated humanitarian interventions is a fundamental strength that could be further exploited across other regions.

R.6 To achieve this DG ECHO should build on its existing experience and good practice developed out of previous preparedness work to maximise its effectiveness across the response cycle. For example:

- By ensuring that the beneficiary perspective is systematically included in ALL lesson learning exercises/workshops; and post crisis evaluations (such as in the DIPECHO model of the National and Regional Consultative Meetings (NCM/RCM));
- Ensuring partner consistency in approach to participation across interventions at the planning and design stage and throughout the intervention through regular meetings of implementing partners.

R.7 DG ECHO should encourage its partners to consider the affected population throughout the 'continuum,' of good practice as far as is appropriate with the nature of the context and type of intervention

- Do No Harm
- Provision of Information
- Getting it right from the start
- Community consultation
- Community mobilisation
- Selection of beneficiaries
- Maintain dialogue
- Use standards flexibly
- Monitoring learning and evaluation
- LRRD and DRR

R.8 DG ECHO should encourage partners to adopt an iterative approach to developing log frames in the Single Form together with humanitarian agencies. This could be accepting an initial log frame which can be refined on the basis of participatory information, or allowing the development of the log

frame over a longer time frame together with the DG ECHO TA. This will enable a better reflection of grass root priorities.

R.9 DG ECHO should challenge and encourage its partners working in complex on-going emergencies to become more creative in their project conception. For example, taking a longer term strategic approach (five year plan) within which DG ECHO and other donor funding can be fitted.

R. 10 DG ECHO should systematically highlight the strategic importance of human resources in ensuring appropriate participative approaches on the ground to implementing partners. Issues include: ensuring continuity of staff; reinforcing the importance of attitude and relationships between agency and affected populations, and reinforcing the importance of dignity and accountability to all members of affected populations whether they are direct beneficiaries or not.

R.11 DG ECHO should encourage a genuine commitment from partners to a grass roots participatory approach. DG ECHO should ensure that it allows for adequate training and capacity building budgets for all agencies working through local partners To reinforce this DG ECHO should provide specific funding which is allocated to ensure adequate training and capacity building of local partners to ensure predictable, high quality work at field level and genuine capacity to engage in appropriate participatory approaches.

R.12 DG ECHO should continue to use the TAs and their frequent field visits to maximise flexibility within partner agreements in the best interests of the affected populations; and to monitor and encourage general good practice including that provided by appropriate participatory approaches.

R.13 DG ECHO should encourage implementing partners to fully embrace grassroots participation as an approach to all humanitarian interventions. This could be done through encouraging:

- Human resource departments to value people skills alongside technical skills.
- Partnering with CBOs and LNGOs where appropriate
- Additional training for local staff and CBOs or LNGOs.