

BROOKINGS *u*<sup>b</sup>

*The Brookings – Bern  
Project on Internal Displacement*

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UNIVERSITÄT  
BERN

***MOVING BEYOND RHETORIC:  
CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION WITH  
POPULATIONS DISPLACED BY CONFLICT OR  
NATURAL DISASTERS***

***OCTOBER 2008***

***THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION – UNIVERSITY OF BERN  
PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The goal of this desk study is to encourage reflection and debate on the benefits, limitations and risks of consultative and participatory approaches in working with communities displaced by both conflict and natural disasters. It reviews previous experiences of consultation with internally displaced persons and others and explains why consultation is critical for both displaced communities and the agencies which work with them.

2. As articulated in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, all governments have an obligation to consult with displaced populations and to facilitate their participation in decisions that affect their lives.

3. Advantages of consultation and participation include both instrumental benefits, for example, better needs assessments, improved efficiency, implementation, and sustainability of projects; and value-based benefits, including empowerment and capacity building of affected communities.

4. Consultation and participation are important in a range of activities including: humanitarian assistance in both acute and protracted crises; beneficiary identification; camp creation and management; return, resettlement, and reintegration; peace processes and conflict resolution; development of a national legal framework for protection of IDPs; mine-action; livelihoods; and political processes such as elections and referenda. As noted in the Guiding Principles (Section II) people have the right to be protected from arbitrary displacement. However, when displacement is necessary, the free and informed consent of those to be displaced should be sought.

5. In setting up an inclusive consultation process, efforts should be made to include both women and men as well as representatives from different age groups, socio-economic groups, religions, ethnicities, etc. in a way that does not exclude marginalized groups or put them at risk. Host communities should also be involved in as much of this process as possible.

6. Effective consultation and participation is characterized by:

- Clear goals and expectations among all parties.
- A focus on results: effective participation happens when participants can actually influence the outcomes.
- Community involvement at every step of the process.
- Sufficient understanding of the social, cultural and political context and recognition of existing hierarchies by those organizing the consultations.
- The involvement of all stakeholders who perceive themselves to be affected, including communities which host displaced persons.
- The use of trained facilitators to carry out the consultations.
- Effective coordination among agencies and communities.

7. The effectiveness of consultation will be influenced by a number of factors, including; access to populations (e.g. women, non-camp populations, and communities in insecure areas may be more difficult to access); as well as the availability, skills and education of the population. IDPs may also be affected by events related to their displacement to a degree that they are unable or unwilling to participate. In addition, the affected population may not be interested in participation if it is not perceived to be in their interest. The relationship between the implementing agency and the population will also affect the consultative process, as will characteristics of the implementing agency such as resources, mandate, areas of expertise and experience in a particular area.

8. There can be risks in engaging with displaced populations. There may be security risks both for IDPs and agencies, particularly in conflict or post-conflict areas. IDPs may run the risk of being stigmatized by their host community. ‘Over-participation’ is a danger when the same IDPs are repeatedly asked similar questions. Consultation can also inadvertently reinforce hierarchical structures and further marginalize vulnerable groups. Consultations may give rise to unrealistic expectations. The process can also be manipulated by the implementing agency or participants, leading to distrust.

9. There are important ethical considerations at every stage of consultation processes, especially related to obligations, responsibilities, accountability, and power relations.

10. A variety of participatory methodologies, techniques and guidelines are available, most of which emphasize the need for flexibility and knowledge of the local context and communities. The methods used will vary by agencies, contexts and characteristics of affected populations.

11. Although the study emphasizes the many benefits of consulting with the displaced, it may not be possible to establish consultative mechanisms in all situations. But it is important to find ways of ensuring that the voices of IDPs are taken into consideration at various phases of displacement

## FOREWORD

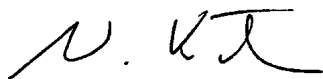
I am pleased to introduce this report, *Moving beyond Rhetoric: Consultation and Participation with Populations Displaced by Conflict or Natural Disasters*. Since taking up my mandate, I have learned that consulting with internally displaced persons is central to understanding their situation, responding to their needs, and finding durable solutions to their displacement. As the title of the report indicates, governments, international agencies and local organizations have generally recognized the importance of consulting with beneficiaries, but often fail to carry through with consultations in practice. Sometimes they cite the demands of an acute emergency situation or lack of resources or the complexity of the situation as reasons for failing to consult with those displaced by conflict or natural disasters. I hope that this study, by reviewing practices of many different organizations, will serve as a useful resource for those wishing to set up regular mechanisms for consulting with internally displaced persons. The report begins by recalling the reasons why consultations with IDPs are necessary, then discusses practical ways of engaging in consultations, and concludes with suggestions for avoiding some of the risks and ethical difficulties raised in consultation processes.

An earlier version of this report served as background for a November 2007 meeting on “Consulting with IDPs: Moving Beyond Rhetoric” in which participants shared their experiences in consulting with IDPs.

This report complements another publication of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement: *Listening to the Voices of the Displaced: Lessons Learned* by Roberta Cohen which draws out common issues and themes from interviews with over 800 internally displaced persons.

I am grateful to Joy Miller and Kim Stoltz for putting together this desk study and to Co-Director Elizabeth Ferris for her editorial and substantive input into this initiative.

We hope that these publications will encourage governments and organizations to do more to ensure that consulting with internally displaced persons moves beyond rhetoric to become standard operating practice.



Walter Kälin  
Representative of the Secretary-General on the  
Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of engaging directly with populations affected by poverty, conflict and disaster is a common theme in the literature on humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding. The mandate to engage in consultation and participation with affected communities has been enshrined in, for example, UN Security Council Resolutions, UN agency manuals, international conventions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) codes of conduct and guidelines, as well as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement's own publications and the reports of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons also emphasize the need for governments and humanitarian actors to consult and engage directly with displaced populations.

In addition to the sound legal reasons to consult with IDPs, proponents of consultation and participation argue that these processes allow agencies<sup>1</sup> to gain local knowledge that is critical for good decision-making and to build on local capacities, benefiting affected populations and agencies themselves.<sup>2</sup> Reasons for participation and consultation can be categorized as instrumental – focused on the way that consultation and participation can improve the relevance, quality, sustainability, timeliness and efficiency of support for affected populations – or value-oriented, focused on empowering and building capacity among the populations themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite the many documented benefits, consultation with and participation by affected populations – including IDPs – remains limited.<sup>4</sup> At best, IDP community leaders are consulted.<sup>5</sup> However, in a significant number of cases, IDPs are not even provided with complete and

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, “agencies” refers to institutions and organizations providing support through activities and programs for displaced persons and other populations affected by conflict and disaster. “Agencies” may refer to government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies or institutions such as development banks.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery/NGO Impact Initiative. *NGO Impact Initiative: An Assessment by the International Humanitarian NGO Community* (New York, October 2006), 9; ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003); Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results:*

*A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006); African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations*, (2001).

<sup>3</sup> ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (Overseas Development Institute, London, 2003); all ALNAP case studies.

<sup>4</sup> ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (Overseas Development Institute, London, 2003); J. Borton et al., *Support to Internally Displaced Persons – Learning from Evaluations, Synthesis Report of a Joint Evaluation Programme*, commissioned by Danida, Development Cooperation Ireland, DFID, ECHO, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, OCHA, Sida, UNHCR, WFP, USAID, 2005. <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2005/sida-gen-28feb.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> J. Borton et al. *Support to Internally Displaced Persons – Learning from Evaluations, Synthesis Report of a Joint Evaluation Programme* (2005).

accurate information on decisions that are being made about their future.<sup>6</sup> While numerous publications expound on the importance of consulting with IDPs, good practices for how to do so are not well researched or understood.

## 1.1 Objectives and sources for literature review

This study is a review of literature on consultation and participation with populations affected by natural disaster and conflict – many of whom are internally displaced. While there are other causes of displacement, particularly large scale development projects, those displaced by conflicts and natural disasters have much in common.<sup>7</sup> Those displaced by development projects generally have more notice of their relocation and World Bank guidelines provide guidance as to how relocation should be addressed.<sup>8</sup> The objectives of this study are to understand current practices of participation and consultation, to identify factors that will affect these practices when undertaken with displaced populations and to identify the positive and negative results that engagement with IDPs may produce both for displaced persons and for agencies working with them. The study is directed to all those working with IDPs and host communities. While governments maintain the primary responsibility for IDPs, in reality multiple bodies including local, national, and international NGOs, UN agencies, and others are engaged – or should be engaged - in the process. Many of the processes discussed here may also be applicable to refugees and others affected by conflict and natural disasters. Likewise, many of the examples of consultation used in this study are drawn from refugee settings, but the approaches and principles are applicable to IDP situations.

Sources include manuals and toolkits on participatory assessment, development practices, and ensuring accountability to beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance. Such manuals have been produced by a wide variety of agencies including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam and Save the Children, donors including the Department for International Development (DFID), financial institutions such as the African and Asian Development Banks, and research and advocacy groups. The study also draws from literature on public participation in the context of policy making which – although generally oriented towards industrialized democracies – offers additional lessons

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<sup>6</sup> Oxfam America, “Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An unfolding tragedy on the Gulf Coast,” (August 2006); I. Wall, “Where’s My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005); Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery/NGO Impact Initiative. *NGO Impact Initiative: An Assessment by the International Humanitarian NGO Community* (New York, October 2006), 14, 35; International Medical Corps, “Displaced in America: Health Status Among Internally Displaced Persons in Louisiana and Mississippi Travel Trailer Parks: A Global Perspective,” (August 2006), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Ferris, “Natural Disaster- and Conflict-induced Displacement: Similarities, Differences and Inter-Connections,” (paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology Panel: “Expanding the borders of disaster-caused displacement research,” 27 March 2008).

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, *The World Bank Operational Manual*, Operational Directive (OD) 4.30: Involuntary Resettlement, (June 1990), para. 8.

[http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/enviro.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/pol\\_Resettlement/\\$FILE/OD430\\_InvoluntaryResettlement.pdf](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/enviro.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/pol_Resettlement/$FILE/OD430_InvoluntaryResettlement.pdf)

regarding community participation.<sup>9</sup> While the study's focus is on consultation with and participation of IDPs, the concepts and examples that follow are gleaned from a variety of studies on refugees, children, and other groups affected by conflict or disaster.

This report begins by introducing the concept of participation as it relates to this study, as well as its legal underpinnings. It then illustrates how consultation and participation are employed in the field, and provides examples from a variety of settings – for example, camp management - in which consultative and participatory approaches might be used. A major part of the study is devoted to examining what we have learned about these approaches and some of the real-life factors that make participation more or less effective and appropriate, from the potential benefits to the potential risks. Finally, the document looks at the practical aspects of consultation by examining the selection of participants and methods of consultations.

An important conclusion of this review and the literature from which it draws is that there can be no “one-size-fits-all” method to consultation.<sup>10</sup> Flexibility of approach is critical; methods used can and should vary among agencies and across contexts. There are nonetheless certain factors that should be considered in order to address questions regarding how, when, why and with whom agencies should consult and engage.

This study, drafted by Joy Miller and Kimberly Stoltz of the Brookings-Bern Project and Nina Schrepfer of the University of Bern with the assistance of Elizabeth Ferris, served as background for a small workshop held in November 2007 which brought together representatives of different organizations who have been engaged in consultative processes with communities affected by conflict and disaster. The insights from that workshop, and particularly the case studies which were presented, have been used to enrich the original background study. (Several of the case studies can be found in the appendix to this study.)

## 1.2 Definition of key terms

### *Internally displaced persons (IDPs)*

As defined by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, internally displaced persons are:

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner's Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation and the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment (viWTA) in collaboration with the United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU/CRIS) (December 2003).

<sup>10</sup> M. Blagescu et al., *Pathways to Accountability: A short guide to the GAP Framework* (One World Trust, 2005); V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia, The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), February 1998. [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/gp\\_page.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/idp/gp_page.aspx).

### ***Consultation and participation – a spectrum***

Broadly defined, consultation is the process of soliciting and listening to people’s opinions and perceptions of affected populations. Participation refers to deeper engagement that may imply the affected community’s control over decision making, and/or contribution of labor, skills or material inputs. Consultation and participation are part of a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over initiatives and decisions that affect them. The process of participation is generally understood to follow a spectrum of increasing levels of engagement (as illustrated in the box below). For example, information-sharing and consultation are considered stages of the participation spectrum.

#### ***Participation Spectrum***

- ⇒ Passive participation or information sharing in which the affected population is informed, but not heard (e.g. dissemination of documents or public briefings by officials)
- ⇒ Information transfer – affected populations supply information in response to questions but do not make decisions and do not influence the process. (This often takes the form of field visits and interviews.)
- ⇒ Consultation – affected populations are asked to offer their opinions, suggestions, and perspectives but are not involved in decision-making or implementation of projects (and there is no guarantee that their views will influence the process.) Consultations can take multiple forms, including focus group discussions and interviews.
- ⇒ Collaboration - the affected population is directly involved in needs analysis and project implementation. They may also contribute to agency-led projects with labor and other skills. (e.g. displaced persons supply labor for the construction of their new houses in an agency-sponsored project.)
- ⇒ Decision making and control of resources – the affected populations are involved in project assessment, planning, evaluation and decision making. (This may involve, for example, a working group or joint-committee of agency and local leadership.)
- ⇒ Local initiative and control – the affected populations take the initiative; the project is conceived and run by the community, potentially with the support of agencies (e.g. a community-based organization may organize professional training classes while receiving funding from another agency.)

The Participation Spectrum was adapted from the following: P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004); Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation*, (April 2006); African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003), 7.4; ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 22.

It is important to realize that participation may be understood in various ways by affected populations or agencies, depending on the context and culture. In Colombia, for example, “[p]articipation is perceived as a duty and right of citizenship to influence actions and/or

decisions that concern them.<sup>12</sup> Another critical aspect of participation is its link to power differentials – effective participatory approaches are those in which agencies yield a certain amount of power to local communities. Genuine participation involves affected communities’ active involvement in the decision-making process, and not merely the implementation of top-down decisions.<sup>13</sup> In fact, in situations where an agency engages the community but does not meet their expressed concerns, the results may be negative.

### ***Accountability***

While definitions of accountability vary, a useful one is provided by One World Trust’s “Global Accountability Project” (GAP): Accountability “refers to the processes through which an organization makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment....To be accountable, an organization needs to understand the needs and interests of key stakeholders. This is best achieved through engagement and a participatory approach to decision-making. The organization needs to establish mechanisms that enable stakeholders to input into decisions that affect them”.<sup>14</sup> Without engaging affected communities to understand their needs, agencies cannot be effectively accountable.

### ***Stakeholders***

Stakeholders are people or communities who may directly or indirectly affect or be affected by the outcomes of projects or programs. Effects may be positive or negative.

- ⇒ *Primary stakeholders* – those individuals and groups who are directly affected by an activity, either positively or negatively.
- ⇒ *Secondary stakeholders* – all other individuals or institutions with a stake, interest or intermediary role in the activity, who may influence a development intervention or are indirectly affected by it. This could include governments, agencies, civil society, and donors.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia, The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 49.

<sup>13</sup> M. Blagescu et al., *Pathways to Accountability: A short guide to the GAP Framework* (One World Trust, 2005), 23.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> This definition was adapted from the following: African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003).

## **2. BENEFITS OF CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION: INSTRUMENTAL, NORMATIVE, AND LEGAL RATIONALE**

### **2.1 Benefits of Consultation and Participation**

Manuals and toolkits on consultation and participation recognize that engagement with affected populations may benefit both the affected populations and the actors and institutions acting to assist them. Benefits can be classified according to whether they are “instrumental” – offering pragmatic benefits to improve program design and implementation – or civic or value-based which focus on capacity building and empowerment of affected populations and which view participation as a political and social process that may result in positive changes within the population itself.<sup>16</sup> In fact, those benefits are not mutually exclusive and can reinforce each other.

#### **2.1.1 Instrumental benefits of participation**

Various studies have confirmed that conflict- and disaster-affected populations look to community leaders, NGOs and local government figures to provide them with necessary information about their situations.<sup>17</sup> Failure of authorities and agencies to provide this information, as well as to seek information from the community may lead to the failure of programs.<sup>18</sup> The Framework for National Responsibility focuses primarily on the instrumental benefits of participation, observing that programs for IDPs will be more effective and will better address IDPs’ priorities and needs when IDPs are consulted.<sup>19</sup>

#### ***Better Assessment of needs and capacities***

A major challenge to effective needs and capacities assessments is accurate information. From the perspective of agencies, one basic benefit of consultation is the information received from affected populations. This is especially helpful in long-running emergencies and other situations where the high-risk locations often shift and populations are displaced multiple times. In

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<sup>16</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia, The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner’s Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation and the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment (viWTA) in collaboration with the United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU/CRIS) (December 2003), 10; ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft), Overseas Development Institute, London, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> I. Wall, “Where’s My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (2005), 4; Oxfam America, “Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An unfolding tragedy on the Gulf Coast,” (August 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Community and Family Services International, Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, and Notre Dame University Research Center, *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines* (October 2003), 9.

<sup>19</sup> Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility* (2005).

UNHCR consultations in Bangladesh, refugees were able to identify the groups whom they considered most vulnerable in the community.

Those groups most frequently highlighted were: young women without parents and other vulnerable young women, particularly those abducted and who later returned to the camp pregnant, older persons with no safe place to live or without family support, adult children or carers, orphaned or separated children, women with no men to support them, women with relatives in prison, women in prison, unregistered refugees who returned after forced repatriation, people on the ‘cleared’ list, women who have been subject to sexual violence, those in prison falsely accused and persons with disabilities.<sup>20</sup>

Consultation can also reveal where coping mechanisms have already been developed, where they have not, and how different vulnerabilities are evolving for various groups.<sup>21</sup> Such information can directly impact the effectiveness and relevance of assistance programs by helping agencies to supply aid where it is needed and to allow local capacities to operate undisturbed where it is not. Participatory issue identification and needs assessment may also reveal unexpected issues and priorities. For example, in Angola, IDPs frequently requested assistance to build *ondjangos* (the umbundu word for a community meeting place), even though in the eyes of humanitarian actors, they had more pressing humanitarian needs. IDPs prioritized having *ondjangos* to give their community a place to meet and affirm their identity as a community – something that agencies would not have known if they had not consulted with IDPs directly.<sup>22</sup> Projects that are better adapted to meet the real needs of IDPs will have a greater impact and ensure that communities’ most pressing requirements are met appropriately.<sup>23</sup>

***Example – where consultation improved education among IDPs***

In Angola, consultation allowed organizations to identify particular vulnerabilities among school-aged children. One example of how consultation can provide valuable information to planners is through “the work of certain children’s agencies – United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) – with IDPs. Consultation with IDPs (and observation of displaced children) showed that educational problems were not necessarily due to a lack of school buildings, materials or teachers. Experience of conflict, the process of displacement and the lack of schooling over a number of years had created severe difficulties in adjusting to school. Seeking solutions to these difficulties required further consultation, and testing of possible approaches with the parents and teachers. Only through working closely with those involved was it possible to pinpoint the problems and devise solutions.”

P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 54-55.

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007).

<sup>21</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> J. Borton, et al, *Support to Internally Displaced Persons – Learning from Evaluations, Synthesis Report of a Joint Evaluation Programme* (2005), 62.



### ***Efficiency – minimize cost, waste, fraud, and delays***

Studies have shown that programs developed using local knowledge and skills are designed and delivered more efficiently and are more likely to be carried out on time.<sup>24</sup> For implementing agencies, the participation of IDPs may therefore reduce both the workload and costs of the project.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in Colombia, IDPs have demanded to participate, even refusing to get involved in certain programs when they had not been consulted.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore in the interest of agencies and IDPs to ensure that displaced communities participate in order to minimize cost, waste, and delays.

#### ***Example – where consultation would have reduced cost and waste***

Tasked with providing for the internally displaced on a national scale, the Colombian state's Social Solidarity Network (RSS) "designed a kit for returnee families. It contains 15 chickens, 5 hens, manioc, banana-plantain and maize plants, and foodstuffs, but appears not to be adapted to certain local contexts. The battery chickens are of a commercial type.

They have clipped beaks that prevent them from eating naturally (like free-range chickens) and consume more water. The seeds and a few of the plants are apparently different from the species grown in the Medio Atrato area and, therefore, less accepted by the community and less adapted to the climate. In consequence, some families feed the chickens and hens the foodstuffs provided for human consumption, and in a few villages one observes numerous manioc and banana-plantain plants abandoned unused on the river banks."

V. de Geoffroy et al, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 68.

### ***Improve implementation and sustainability***

A population involved from the beginning of an initiative is more likely to contribute to making the initiative work and sustaining it. In development programs it has been shown that involving the community in projects leads to greater community commitment to them, even after the withdrawal of outside support.<sup>27</sup> Consulting displaced communities about which projects to prioritize is likely to provide communities with a greater sense of ownership, leading to greater sustainability.<sup>28</sup> For example, in a Sri Lankan neighborhood containing both self-constructed

<sup>24</sup> N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner's Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation and the Flemish Institute for Science and Technology Assessment (viWTA) in collaboration with the United Nations University – Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU/CRIS) (December 2003), 11; Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006); J. Borton, et al, *Support to Internally Displaced Persons – Learning from Evaluations, Synthesis Report of a Joint Evaluation Programme* (2005), 62; Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility*, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 76.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 18, 52.

<sup>27</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003); J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka* ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 58.

(and NGO-organized) housing and government-built housing, beneficiary participation played a clear role in satisfaction and sustainability of the homes. Of those in government-built housing, the majority wished they had been involved in constructing their homes. Those living in self-constructed houses generally were happy with the quality of their homes, proud of their work, and actively maintained the homes.<sup>29</sup>

***Greater relevance and impact, improved quality of decisions and planning*** Consultation and participation may lead to improved project design by drawing on local knowledge and expertise to ensure that designs are culturally appropriate and accurately reflect displaced persons' priorities. Moreover, community input may provide agencies the opportunity to foresee and/or resolve potential obstacles and conflicts, allowing them to refine and modify programming to better meet IDPs' needs.<sup>30</sup> However, there are situations where IDP requests are either unfeasible or could pose a risk to the community if carried out. (For a more detailed explanation, see section "Risks involved in participation" below.)

In some scenarios, participation in humanitarian assistance can benefit the displaced community as well as national agencies organizing humanitarian assistance. In a post-emergency camp setting in Tanzania, a health information team (HIT) comprised of Congolese refugees operated as part of the camp's health services program under the Tanzanian Red Cross Society (TRCS)'s supervision. The HIT's positive impact on refugee health was recognized by the TRCS, the refugees, and the HIT members themselves. The Congolese beneficiaries mentioned the importance of HIT's work in terms of education, treatment, prevention, and needs assessments. One person noted, "HIT work is well known among us. One day, an HIT member came to my house to give me first aid when I was sick. He also advised me how to prevent communicable diseases." The Tanzanian Red Cross Society felt there were specific advantages to working with members of the refugee community. "HIT understands the language of the people and is good at creating relationships between the refugee community and the health services of the camp... HIT uses simple words that can be easily understood by the people."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 58.

<sup>30</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001).

<sup>31</sup> Y. Tanaka et al., "Refugee participation in health relief services during the post-emergency phase in Tanzania," *Public Health* 118 (2004): 50-61.

***Example - where participation revealed community priorities***

In a UNHCR-led consultation with refugees in Bangladesh, “refugee women and men requested variety in their food rations after 15 years of eating rice and pulses. They told of how their children cried and wives and husbands fought over the lack of food and how they sold rations in order to purchase other basic items such as fish and vegetables, including onions and garlic, whenever possible. [...] They also explained that rations are sold to purchase medication, kerosene and clothing, pay bribes, and be able to visit family in jail.” The consultations revealed that families preferred access to work over access to food rations. Solutions offered in consultations also included the following: accurate measurement and packaging of all rations, the inclusion of spices and a greater variety of food in the rations, or the establishment of markets and/or market gardens inside the camp. The consulting team agreed that “the introduction of vegetable patches is an important first small step and the production of garlic and spices should be encouraged to respond to the wish to enhance the taste of the food as well as vegetables to improve the diet.”

UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh -March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007).

***Build understanding and credibility among parties***

Participation and cooperative work are likely to build understanding, reduce controversy and improve the working relationship between IDPs and agencies, including government and humanitarian actors.<sup>32</sup> Participation can also establish a climate of mutual trust between the displaced population and agencies. For example, a UNHCR-led consultation report notes that, “[P]rograms and activities which engaged individuals and groups within the camps would offer the potential to build some trust between the refugees and service providers, including UNHCR, and to begin to work *with* them in exploring both immediate and longer term solutions to their situation” (emphasis in the original text.)<sup>33</sup> Consultations may increase the humanitarian or government actor’s credibility and lend greater legitimacy to decisions and programs subsequently carried out.<sup>34</sup> However, the credibility of the agency only improves if it succeeds in meeting the demands of the affected community. In situations where consultation takes place and agencies are unable (or unwilling, for any number of reasons) to deliver, credibility is of course tarnished. This could lead to distrust and a poor working relationship among the parties involved.

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<sup>32</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 4.

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh -March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007), 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

### **2.1.2 Civic or value-based benefits of participation**

Benefits of participation according to this category – which may be described as civic, value-based or normative – revolve around principles of equity, empowerment, democratic participation and the development and behavioral change of individuals and civil society.<sup>35</sup>

#### ***Respect and empowerment***

In addition to being a fundamental right, active participation demonstrates respect for affected populations, helps develop skills and confidence and contributes to capacity building of stakeholders and local institutions.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, participation may lead to a better educated public, increased civic participation, empowerment of local populations, and increased gender and social equality. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP)’s policy on participation looks beyond the instrumental benefits of participation, noting that “WFP will use participatory approaches to bring the poorest and marginalized people into its assistance programmes, strengthen their representation in community structures and overcome gender inequalities by creating opportunities for both women’s and men’s voices to be heard.”<sup>37</sup> By contrast, initiatives that do not consult or keep IDPs fully informed are likely to increase the sense of helplessness and desolation that often results from exposure to armed violence and forced migration.<sup>38</sup> Notably, many NGOs view development as a process in which community empowerment is the primary goal. The quantitative deliverables resulting from projects are often secondary to the more abstract and long-term benefits of empowerment and participation of community members.

In 2002, the ALNAP Sri Lanka team found only a small number of humanitarian agencies in the country implementing what they refer to as ‘transformative’ models of participation, i.e. focused on empowerment, returning control to communities, and encouraging IDPs to play a role in building their futures.<sup>39</sup> If manuals and toolkits are any indication, by 2006, this approach seemed to be more widespread. UNHCR’s participatory assessment tool, for example, is aimed

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<sup>35</sup> J. Boyden, et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 28; ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (Overseas Development Institute, London, 2003); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003).

<sup>36</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 17; African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003).

<sup>37</sup> World Food Programme, “Consolidated Framework of WFP Policies. An Updated Version.” Executive Board Third Regular Session Rome, 20-24 October 2003 quoted in D. Maxwell and J. Burns, *Targeting in Complex Emergencies: South Sudan Country Case Study*, Feinstein International Center (Medford, MA: Tufts University, May 2008).

<sup>38</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 51; Oxfam America, *Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An unfolding tragedy on the Gulf Coast* (August 2006). See also J. Rubenstein, “The Distributive Commitments of Multinational NGOs” in *Humanitarianism in Question*, M. Barnett and T. Weis, Eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 224-225.

<sup>39</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 28.

towards “empowering the community as a whole, and the individuals within the community, to access and enjoy their rights.”<sup>40</sup>

### ***Good governance***

The role of governments in consultation and participation with IDPs is complex and of course varies with each situation. In cases where the government was not actively engaged in violence or displacement, consulting and engaging the displaced may well have positive results. Related to civic or normative benefits, public participation experts have found that citizen participation can increase public support for and understanding of government programs.<sup>41</sup> While this is in some ways an instrumental benefit for the implementing agency, there are also close links between participation and good governance. According to the African Development Bank, allowing affected populations to make their voice heard can “help lay the foundation for good governance at local/ national levels.”<sup>42</sup>

However, this assumes that a) the government has an interest in aiding and empowering its affected population and b) that the affected population wishes to communicate and coordinate with the state. In some cases, the affected community may resent the state (rightly or wrongly) for not preventing their displacement and exposure to violence/disaster. In other cases, it may perceive the state to be the sponsor of the violence which displaced them, in which case even revealing themselves as part of the affected community could be dangerous.

## **2.2 Legal Obligations of Governments in Terms of Consultation and Participation with Internally Displaced Persons**

The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* refer to the obligation to consult with IDPs and enable them to participate in decisions which affect their lives. The *Guiding Principles* which, while not binding as such, are recognized by the world community as an important international framework for the protection of IDPs.<sup>43</sup> They restate relevant guarantees of human rights and international humanitarian law, including those guaranteeing rights to consultation and participation. Such guarantees apply to some degree to all phases of displacement. While there are few studies which refer to consultation in preventing displacement caused by conflict or natural disasters, it might be relevant to look at the guidelines as they apply to involuntary displacement in other situations.

In addition to the instrumental and civic-based benefits of consulting with IDPs, there is growing pressure on agencies to consult with beneficiaries, including IDPs. For example, the “Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief,” drawn up in 1992 and now signed by over 400 organizations says “ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid,” and “We hold ourselves

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<sup>40</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 13.

<sup>41</sup> N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner’s Manual* (King Baudouin Foundation et al., December 2003), 10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> See World Summit Outcome Document 2005, UN Doc. A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, para. 132.

accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.”<sup>44</sup> In addition to this code of conduct and others developed by individual agencies, there is also a legal basis for consulting with IDPs.

### **2.2.1 Consultation in situations of evacuation or relocation**

If involuntary displacement occurs in situations other than emergencies resulting from armed conflict or natural disaster, the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* provide for some procedural safeguards, including aspects of consultation and participation of the population affected by the displacement.

It is widely recognized that those to be displaced should be fully informed on the reasons and procedures of displacement as well as on possible compensation and relocation.<sup>45</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples provides in Article 16 that relocation shall take place only with the free and informed consent of the population concerned.<sup>46</sup> Where consent cannot be obtained, relocation must follow certain legally established procedures, including public inquiries with appropriate representation of the population affected by the relocation.<sup>47</sup> It is also recognized that the involvement of those affected by relocation in planning and management is crucial, while particular attention should be given to the consultation and participation of the most vulnerable groups among the affected.<sup>48</sup>

### **2.2.2 Consultation during displacement**

#### ***Consultation and the right to an adequate standard of living***

Consultation and participation of IDPs as a good practice may be derived from international human rights instruments guaranteeing the right of everyone to an *adequate* standard of living, including adequate food, clothing, housing, and medical care.<sup>49</sup> As these instruments do not define what is adequate under the circumstances, consultation and participation of populations affected may be the only way to identify whether this standard is met, taking into account the

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<sup>44</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *The Code of Conduct: Principles of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes* (Geneva, Switzerland: IFRC, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Principle 7 (3) (b) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>46</sup> Art. 16 (2) ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples; Art. 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN Doc. A/61/L.67, Annex, of 7 September 2007. See also Principle 7 (3) (c) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>47</sup> Art. 16 (2) ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

<sup>48</sup> Principle 7 (3) (d) of the *Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>49</sup> Art. 25 UDHR, Art. 11 CESCR, Art. 27 CRC, Art. 14 (2) (h) CEDAW. Principle 18 of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. International humanitarian law does not explicitly foresee a general guarantee of an adequate standard of living but contains specific norms with regard to food, water, shelter and health care. Among those guarantees is e.g. Art. 54 AP I which asks for the protection of indispensable goods to the survival of the civilian population.

specific circumstances, in particular the prevailing social, economic, and cultural conditions<sup>50</sup> and the particular needs of the displaced persons.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), synthesizing the practice of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, sums up the four core elements of the concept of adequacy as follows: (i) availability; (ii) accessibility; (iii) acceptability; and (iv) adaptability.<sup>51</sup>

For goods and services to be accessible, wide dissemination of information to the potential beneficiaries is necessary. Persons affected have not only the right to seek and impart information, but also to receive such.<sup>52</sup> On the part of the state, this includes obligations to inform displaced communities with regard to goods and services, such as food, water or medical care. Apart from information on where food, water and other goods for an adequate standard of living can be obtained, physical accessibility is also important. Consultation and a participatory assessment will also enhance understanding about the situation of the affected communities and minimizes the risk that certain groups are excluded from access, for example through inadequate placement of water points or locations for food distribution.<sup>53</sup>

To determine the specific cultural acceptability (i.e. respect towards the culture of individuals, minorities, peoples and communities<sup>54</sup>) and to adapt goods, such as food or water, to the specific and particular needs (or to changes in the needs) of the population affected, on-going consultation and participation is essential. Otherwise, the risk arises of providing culturally unacceptable goods, which is problematic with respect to guaranteeing the human right to an adequate standard of living.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stresses in its General Comments that national strategies and plans of action implementing the right to food, water, housing and health on a national level, should provide for consultation with affected populations and their participation.<sup>55</sup> In its General Comment on the right to housing, the Committee states, that

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<sup>50</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 12, The right to adequate food (Art. 11(1)), UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/5, 12 May 1999, para. 7; General Comment No. 4, The right to adequate housing (Art. 11), 13 December 1999, para. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Protecting Persons affected by Natural Disasters, *IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters*, June 2006, Guideline B.2.1. See also CESCR, General Comment No. 12, The right to adequate food (Art. 11(1)), UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/5, 12 May 1999, paras. 8 and 11-13.

<sup>52</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 15, The right to water (Arts. 11 and 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11, 10 January 2003, para. 12 (c) (iv); General Comment No. 14, The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, para. 12 (b). This right is also guaranteed in article 19 ICCPR.

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR, *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 14, The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, para. 12 (c). Regarding the cultural adequacy of the way housing is constructed, the Committee, in General Comment No. 4, The right to adequate housing (Art. 11), 13 December 1999, para. 8 (g), points out, that modernization in the housing sphere should not sacrifice cultural dimensions of housing and that “building materials used and policies supporting these must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing”.

<sup>55</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 12, The right to adequate food (Art. 11(1)), UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/5, 12 May 1999, para. 23; General Comment No. 14, The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, para. 54; General Comment No. 4, The right to adequate housing (Art. 11), 13 December 1999, para. 12; General Comment No. 15, The right to water (Arts. 11 and 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11, 10 January 2003, para. 48. The adoption of such strategies and policies belongs to the core obligations of States parties and the failure

“[b]oth for reasons of relevance and effectiveness, as well as in order to ensure respect for other human rights, such a [national] strategy should reflect extensive genuine consultation with, and participation by, all of those affected, (...)”.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, it requires the right to participate in decision-making processes as an integral part of any national policy or strategy to implement subsistence rights and the right to health on a national level.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from ensuring an adequate standard of living for women while taking into account their specific needs, special efforts should be made to ensure women’s full participation in the planning and distribution of basic subsistence supplies, such as food and potable water, shelter and housing, clothing, medical services and sanitation.<sup>58</sup> This has been recognized explicitly by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in relation to the right to water.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Consultation and civil and political rights***

As most IDPs are citizens of the countries in which they are displaced, they are therefore entitled to the whole range of rights available to all other citizens,<sup>60</sup> including political rights, which are participatory in nature. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees to every citizen (including IDPs), the right and opportunity to take part in public affairs, to vote and be elected and to have access to public services.<sup>61</sup> Distinctions between citizens in the enjoyment and exercise of those rights on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status are prohibited.<sup>62</sup> It is therefore not permitted to exclude IDPs from the enjoyment of such rights on the grounds of their displacement or to put in place unreasonable restrictions so as to hinder them to exercise their participatory rights. This principle applies during displacement as well as after return or resettlement.<sup>63</sup>

Participation is formalized in the case of elections and referenda. In such cases, states are obliged to “take effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right.”<sup>64</sup> This includes the obligation to issue or replace documentation<sup>65</sup> (such as passports, identification cards or birth certificates) necessary for voter registration, without imposing

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to have such a strategy would amount to a violation of the specific human right. See CESCR, General Comment No. 15, The right to water (Arts. 11 and 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11, 10 January 2003, para. 37 (f) and 43.

<sup>56</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 4, The right to adequate housing (Art. 11), 13 December 1999, para. 12.

<sup>57</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 15, The right to water (Arts. 11 and 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11, 10 January 2003, para. 48; General Comment No. 14, The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, para. 54.

<sup>58</sup> Principle 18 (3) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>59</sup> See CESCR, General Comment No. 15, The right to water (Arts. 11 and 12), UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11, 10 January 2003, para. 16 (a).

<sup>60</sup> See Principle 1 (1) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>61</sup> These rights are also embodied in Arts. 21 UDHR, 5 (c) CERD, 7 CEDAW, 3 AP 1 ECHR, 23 ACHR, 13 AfCHR.

<sup>62</sup> Art. 25 ICCPR expressly refers to the prohibition of discrimination in Art. 2 ICCPR. See also Art. 5 (c) CERD and Principle 22 (1) (c) and (d) as well as Principle 29 (1) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>63</sup> Principle 22(1) (c) and (d); Principle 29 (1) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>64</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25 (Art. 25), The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service, UN Doc. CCPR/C/Rev.1/Add. 7, 12 July 1996, para. 11.

<sup>65</sup> See Guatemalan Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict, II. Guarantees for the resettlement of uprooted groups, para. 7, which states, that lack of personal documentation hinders IDPs in the enjoyment of their civil and political rights.



unreasonable conditions as for example the return to one's home or place of habitual residence.<sup>66</sup> Such measures may also include arrangements for absentee-voting.<sup>67</sup> The rights under Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are not absolute, but may be subjected only to reasonable restrictions. Restrictions aimed at discriminating against the internally displaced in the enjoyment or exercise of those rights, however, must always be deemed as unreasonable and thus as violations of Article 25 ICCPR.<sup>68</sup>

Freedom of expression, assembly and association are necessary pre-conditions to effectively make use of one's political rights. States are therefore obliged to take positive measures to overcome difficulties, such as obstacles to the freedom of movement for IDPs living in camps,<sup>69</sup> which prevent persons from exercising their rights effectively.<sup>70</sup> However, the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, and of assembly and association may be restricted provided that such restriction is prescribed by law, is legitimate and is necessary.<sup>71</sup>

### ***Consultation and the principle of non-discrimination***

The principle of non-discrimination, as embodied in several international and regional instruments,<sup>72</sup> plays an important role with regard to the modalities of consultation with and participation of populations affected by displacement. Although consultation and participation should be as broad as possible, it is obvious that a selection of IDP-representatives is necessary. This selection must be guided by the principle of non-discrimination, which implies that a gender balance must be found and that vulnerable groups and minorities are represented among those selected.

### **2.2.3 Consultation in the context of durable solutions**

Participation and consultation is important in the post-displacement phase, when questions about return, resettlement in another part of the country, and local integration arise. What has been said above regarding the right of IDPs to be consulted and participate without discrimination as intrinsic parts of the rights to an adequate standard of living and political rights also applies to the post-displacement phase when durable solutions (return, local integration, resettlement)<sup>73</sup> are found.

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<sup>66</sup> Principle 20 (2) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>67</sup> *IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters*, Guideline D.5.1.

<sup>68</sup> This can be derived from the wording of Article 25 ICCPR. See also Nowak, Manfred: U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CCPR Commentary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2005, p. 593, para. 50.

<sup>69</sup> Art. 12 ICCPR and Principle 14 (2) of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>70</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 25 (Art. 25), The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service, UN Doc. CCPR/C/Rev.1/Add. 7, 12 July 1996, para. 12.

<sup>71</sup> See Art. 19 (3), Art. 21, Art. 22 (2) CCPR.

<sup>72</sup> In human rights law: Art. 2 UDHR, Art. 2(1), 3 and 26 ICCPR, Art. 2(2) and 3 IESCR, Art. 14 ECHR, Additional Protocol 12/ECHR, Art. 24 ACHR, Art. 3 AfCHR; in international humanitarian law: e.g. common Art. 2 GC, Art. 12 and 31 GC I, Art. 12 GC II, Art. 16 GC III, Art. 13 and 27 GC IV, Art. 9, 75, 85 (4) (c) AP I, Art. 2 (2) AP II. See also e.g. Principle 1 and 4 of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

<sup>73</sup> UNHCR EXCOM Conclusion No. 62 (XLI) 1990, para. a (iv-v).

In addition, it is universally accepted that return must be voluntary and that IDPs have the right to choose whether they wish to return, integrate locally at the place to which they have fled to or resettle to another part of the country.<sup>74</sup> These principles, which have been incorporated into a number of national policies, laws and implementation plans on internal displacement provide for strong cooperation with IDP communities when it comes to questions regarding their return or resettlement.<sup>75</sup> This principle is derived from the freedom of movement and the right to choose one's residence as embodied in Art. 12 ICCPR. Free choice and voluntariness of return necessarily require that IDPs concerned, including women,<sup>76</sup> are fully informed<sup>77</sup> about conditions at the place of return, and about options in other parts of the country so that they are able to make an informed choice. Their full participation in the planning and implementation of such durable solutions critically enhances the chances for them to become sustainable.

## **2.3 Range of Activities in which Consultation and Participation are Important**

Consultation with and participation by displaced communities are valuable in a wide range of programs and initiatives, including: humanitarian assistance; beneficiary identification; camp management, including camp creation and siting; return, reintegration and resettlement; peace processes and peacebuilding; the development of legal frameworks for IDPs; mine-action; and economic and livelihood activities.

While the participation of IDPs in the humanitarian assistance phase (which may include, broadly speaking, camp management and economic activities) has been researched in The Global Study on Participation and Consultation of Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action, a collaborative research project facilitated by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), empirical research in other areas lags behind. In particular, further research is needed into IDP participation during the development of legal frameworks for their protection as well as during peace processes.

### **2.3.1 Humanitarian assistance**

ALNAP's country case studies demonstrate that participation can be effective and feasible during both protracted crises and acute emergency phases and during temporary settlement and camp creation. In establishing camps, participatory activities can be used to select the site for a

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<sup>74</sup> Principle 28 (2) of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

<sup>75</sup> For example, Angola: Art. 5 Council of Ministers Decree No. 1/01, and Art. 9 Council of Ministers Decree No. 79/02; Uganda: Para. 3.4 of the National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons; Article 14 of the Peruvian Law concerning Internal Displacement; Guatemala: Principle 4 of the Agreement on Resettlement of the Populations Uprooted by the Armed Conflict; Nepal: National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, para. 8.3.6.

<sup>76</sup> See UNHCR Excom Conclusion No. 64 (XLI) on Refugee Women and International Protection, 1990, para. (x).

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR Excom Conclusion No. 101 (LV) on Legal Safety Issues on the Context of Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees, 2004, preambular para. 6 and para. (d). See e. g. also para. 3.4.2 of the Ugandan National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons. Go and see visits are a particularly effective means of providing such information (see, e.g., the Sierra Leonean Resettlement Strategy, para. 3.2.2 (3)).

camp and to establish a good relationship between displaced persons and host communities.<sup>78</sup> While consultation/participation is becoming more of an accepted principle in protracted crises, it remains contentious in the context of acute emergencies. The basic arguments against participatory approaches in acute crises relate to time-sensitivities and the priority of life-saving initiatives. “The mind-set means there is often no time to identify, much less to strengthen, local capacities; no time to study local coping mechanisms; no time to work with local NGOs; and not much time to think about the longer-term requirements that will come with reconstruction and postconflict attempts to rebuild normalcy.”<sup>79</sup>

### *Assistance during acute emergencies*

“Acute emergencies” are not a homogenous category and may include famine, rapid outbreak of disease, and/or high levels of mortality from natural disasters or conflict. While it is not possible to discuss the best methods for the varied scenarios here, it should be noted that some agencies are finding pockets of stability in the acute emergency phase within which to consult the displaced. In Angola, the ALNAP team found that humanitarian actors’ emphasis on devoting all resources and efforts towards “quick action” and their belief that “in acute crises affected people are not in a fit state to take part in dialogue” resulted in a reluctance to implement participatory activities during what they perceived to be an acute emergency.<sup>80</sup>

However, this view was not shared by humanitarian actors in all countries. In Colombia, the ALNAP team found that humanitarian actors, including the government, had used various participatory methods with success. Following a massacre of over 100 people and the resulting displacement of the village of Bellavista, the government committee tasked with community reconstruction held meetings with community members and leaders, and even conducted a formal opinion poll with displaced community members. Based on the findings from these activities, the decision was made to move the entire community and to reconstruct the village.<sup>81</sup> In this case, consulting with IDPs in the immediate aftermath of an emergency seems to have resulted in community validation of the reconstruction and greater sustainability of the community in the long-term.

The question that frequently emerges in acute emergencies is how to quickly and effectively implement consultation with beneficiaries. Factors such as insecure funding channels, newly-hired and/or untrained staff, staff turnover, and donor pressures are also factors in acute emergency programming that tend to limit consultative approaches.

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<sup>78</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 18, 60; ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

<sup>79</sup> I. Smillie, ed., *Patronage or Partnership, Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises* (Kumarian Press, 2001), 19.

<sup>80</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola* ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 46.

<sup>81</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 61.

### **Participation in an emergency**

“When the UNHCR emergency team reached Galkayo, Somalia, in January 2007, it was the first time an international agency had been present on the ground for some time. As this was an emergency and an IDP operation, participatory assessment was adapted to the specific context.

Since UNHCR needed to work with other agencies, the emergency team proposed to complement an IDP profiling exercise that was being rolled out by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) with a participatory assessment. By combining the two methodologies, an in-depth understanding of the situation would be obtained.

As UNHCR and DRC had limited staff on the ground, it was difficult to apply the multifunctional-team approach. Instead, a team was recruited locally and trained to do the assessment. Since the political context was highly sensitive, it was decided that “local authorities” would not be included in the focus group discussions, as the IDPs would not have felt safe or free to express all their concerns.

Relations among the different IDP sub-groups were particularly complicated, given the power structures, group-protection systems and clan differences, so IDP committees were consulted separately in order to distinguish the members of the committees from the rest of the community. Because of time and security constraints, only three age groups of each sex were covered in the initial consultation.”

UNHCR, *A Community-based Approach in UNHCR Operations* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, January 2008), 110.

### ***Assistance during protracted crises***

In protracted situations of displacement, there is generally more willingness on the part of humanitarian actors to initiate consultative and participatory activities with displaced communities. Yet even in long-term situations, some humanitarian relief programs – for example, food distribution – remain generally less participatory than others. In Guinea, refugees told the ALNAP team that the food that they received was poorly adapted to their needs because no one had consulted them regarding the contents of the food basket.<sup>82</sup> Adapting food basket contents would indeed require consultation, a process that the World Food Program (WFP) in Guinea argued was too fraught with logistical and economic constraints. This raises many important questions, including: “is it possible to consult and adapt the food basket to the specific requirements of each group of refugees when there are thousands of people to be fed? Is it possible for the WFP to stock a selection of food items for different groups of refugees? And how practical would it be to manage these stocks?”<sup>83</sup>

This illustrates that regardless of the stage of the crisis, certain organizations and those working in particular sectors may indeed face greater constraints in initiating participatory activities.

<sup>82</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 74.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

However, agencies working in those sectors should be encouraged to incorporate participatory activities to the extent possible. For example, while health is another sector that has been traditionally less participatory, it may be an arena where the contribution of IDPs' knowledge and skills would benefit other displaced community members and agencies. The direct participation of IDPs through labor contribution may be a way of involving IDPs to the benefit of both humanitarian actors and displaced populations.

***Example – Participation as contribution of labor***

“Involvement of aid beneficiaries in implementation raises two crucial issues. First, it is not evident what level of labour participation can or should be expected from those exposed to long-term conflict, displacement and economic deprivation. A ZOA initiative in Madhukarai is possibly the most labour-intensive project in Sri Lanka and illustrates many of the dilemmas. An initial participatory needs-assessment established a desire for toilets, houses, wells, livelihood security and roads. The foremost priority for all the village inhabitants was the construction of an access road that had to pass through a large area of uncleared forest and a reservoir.

Some beneficiaries were very enthusiastic about building permanent homes but found the project burdensome because it also involved brick making. With families grouped into teams the work involved high levels of inter-dependency and co-operation, which several found hard to sustain. In addition, different sections of the population had different priorities. ‘Up-country’ Tamils from highland tea estates, where housing and sanitation are provided by the owners, showed little interest in permanent houses and latrines, whereas those relocated from nearby IDP/returnee camps were more enthusiastic, despite finding the construction work difficult. Staff also noted this distinction between recent arrivals and families that had been in the community for some time, the former showing less interest than the latter. By the time it came to wells and latrine enthusiasm was relatively low, mainly because beneficiaries had by then largely met their most pressing needs, but also because UNHCR’s fund allocation only allowed for shared rather than the desired individual wells.

The ZOA example shows that even with a strong institutional commitment to participation, pragmatism and realism is required. Out of respect for the entitlements and integrity of affected populations, and in recognition of the very real constraints, it is important to acknowledge that participation can be burdensome, especially where initiatives are not a top priority for the affected. It is vital therefore to agree at the outset whether there really is value added in introducing participatory approaches. Furthermore, it could be argued that the most meaningful form of participation entails listening to, and capacity building of, civilian populations, helping them to assume social justice and control of their lives – insofar as this is possible. This requires a commitment to more transformative approaches. As one respondent noted: ‘We need to go beyond involving displaced people in meeting collective needs, for example ... get refugees into jobs; help them meet with the authorities. Participation needs to be long-term.’”

J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002).

### **2.3.2 Beneficiary identification**

Displaced populations should be directly consulted and have the opportunity to participate in the identification of beneficiaries for assistance programs. This may involve, for example, participating in the identification of vulnerable groups or individuals among IDP populations. Without local knowledge, incorrect assumptions and perceptions about social and economic conditions and vulnerability may lead to agencies favoring already privileged groups or unwittingly stigmatizing vulnerable groups. In Sri Lanka, for example, the Tamil term for widow implies “that which is inauspicious and pitiable.” Because of this, widows were reluctant to participate in literacy programs which identified them as widows, finally asserting that they would only participate if they were not referred to as widows.”<sup>84</sup> To avoid such situations, communities should be involved in selecting beneficiaries using terminology and references accepted by the community.

Allowing communities too much control over beneficiary selection has risks of its own, however. Following the Nahrin earthquake in Afghanistan, an aid agency’s decision to task certain communities with the selection of beneficiaries for assistance led to accusations of nepotism and increased tension among community members.<sup>85</sup> It should also be noted that identifying beneficiaries and passing aid items directly to them does not ensure that they will remain with the beneficiary. For example, there are numerous instances where women beneficiaries pass rations on to the men in their families, even when they do not use it to feed their families. Similarly, beneficiaries may pass assistance items on to members of armed groups, or they may also pass them on to neighbors and other community members as a means of strengthening social ties. The transfer of rations, sometimes called “sharing,” may reinforce community or kinship networks. It can also mitigate the stigma that is sometimes attached to being an aid recipient.<sup>86</sup> According to a Feinstein International Center study, “the sharing of food aid in a crisis might appear to humanitarian agencies as ‘ration dilution’ which reduced the impact of assistance at the level of the targeted individual, but from the point of view of the recipient the sharing of that assistance has strengthened social ties and thus reduced vulnerability in the longer term.”<sup>87</sup> While local knowledge can contribute significantly to the process of beneficiary identification, local customs may, at the same time, affect the intended outcomes.

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<sup>84</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 43.

<sup>85</sup> F. Grünwald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 61.

<sup>86</sup> Harragin and Chol (1998) in D. Maxwell and J. Burns, *Targeting in Complex Emergencies: South Sudan Country Case Study* (Medford, MA: Tufts University, May 2008), 15.

<sup>87</sup> D. Maxwell and J. Burns, *Targeting in Complex Emergencies: South Sudan Country Case Study* (Medford, MA: Tufts University, May 2008), 15.

### **2.3.3 Camp creation and camp management**

Camp management is also an area where IDPs should play a strong role.<sup>88</sup> In addition to camp management, IDPs can make important contributions in camp creation, including by assisting in selecting a site.

In Cassoni Refugee Camp in Chad, UNHCR has trained refugees as “Protection, Relocation and Information Officers.” These refugees monitor new arrivals, document incidents of crime, identify those with specific needs, conduct feedback sessions with their community members, and manage information centers.<sup>89</sup> This example of UNHCR “good practice” could potentially be adapted to IDP camps and shelters.

The ALNAP Guinea research team found numerous examples of displaced persons playing an active role in camp management. Members of the “Refugee Committee,” who are themselves refugees, were involved in preparing and implementing activities in the refugee camp and in camp administration. For example, Refugee Committee members helped to prepare food in the health clinics so that it would be better adapted to the dietary habits of the patients. In addition to playing an active role in management, members of the Refugee Committee were consulted by humanitarian actors concerning activities to be implemented in the camp and beneficiary selection for specific camp programs.<sup>90</sup> In India, the Organization for Eelam Relief and Rehabilitation (OFERR) organized both camp management committees and women’s committees in all of the camps for Tamil refugee in Tamil Nadu. These committees oversaw all day-to-day management issues within the camps. The women’s committees played a particularly important role in protecting women refugees, by educating women and the host community about potential dangers, by monitoring incidents of violence against refugee women and accompanying women who had been assaulted through the criminal justice system.

The creation of such a committee is another practice that could be utilized in IDP camp situations. However, it cannot be assumed that a single group of displaced persons can represent the concerns of the larger community; relying on the members of a group, whether community leaders or members of a committee like this one, may result in the unintended marginalization of other groups.

### **2.3.4 Return, resettlement and reintegration**

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<sup>88</sup> In fact, *The Framework on National Responsibility* identifies camp management as an area where participation by IDPs can be particularly valuable. This framework sets out specific steps which can be taken by national authorities to implement the *Guiding Principles* into policy and practice. Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility* (2005), 21; B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004).

<sup>89</sup> UNHCR, *Operational Protection in Camps and Settlements: A reference guide of good practices in the protection of refugees and other persons of concern*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 65.

During return, resettlement and reintegration initiatives, IDP input is particularly important, as is the dissemination of clear information about particular concerns of IDPs, which may include issues such as access to land, infrastructure, and services upon return.<sup>91</sup> In most cases, IDPs need this information to be able to make informed decisions. It is also crucial that the displaced are provided with updates regarding the political and economic conditions in both the host area and area of origin. Referring to the situation of Guatemalan refugees, a UNHCR evaluation notes “This access to critical information allows refugees to make informed decisions, especially if they need to decide whether to repatriate or to locally integrate. While much of this is, laudably, already being done, efforts to reach a larger proportion of the displaced population not serviced in the camps could enhance informal information networks.”<sup>92</sup>

Displaced persons should also be supported to undertake “go and see” visits. Such visits have been organized in the Philippines, where Community and Family Services International (CFSI) supported IDPs to visit and to voice their opinions as to whether they wanted to return, as well as to state the desired conditions for return.<sup>93</sup> This stands in contrast to Angola, where no “go and see” visits were facilitated and little information was provided to IDPs. Although IDPs reported that they were anxious to return home, they believed that humanitarian agencies focused only on security and paid little attention to other issues of concern to IDPs.<sup>94</sup>

#### ***Example of good practice – “go and see” visits to support return***

“Go and see” visits with refugees have also been carried out by UNHCR in Burundi and Tanzania. Participants in the visits include refugee women, men and youth from various backgrounds including religious leaders, farmers, and youth groups. When they return to the camps, the refugee participants participate in a panel to de-brief the larger refugee community. Also worth highlighting is the fact that certain aspects of the “go and see” project itself, such as the number of refugee participants and the way information is disseminated upon return, were adjusted based on feedback from refugee leaders. This type of program in which refugees with firsthand knowledge share information with other refugees is considered by UNHCR to be an example of “good practice.”

UNHCR, *Operational Protection in Camps and Settlements: A reference guide of good practices in the protection of refugees and other persons of concern* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), D7.

### **2.3.5 Peace processes and conflict resolution**

The Brookings-Bern study *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements, and Peacebuilding* outlines both the opportunities of and obstacles to IDP

<sup>91</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 10.

<sup>92</sup> C. Cheng and J. Chudoba, “Moving beyond long-term refugee situations: the case of Guatemala,” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 86 (UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Unit, March 2003).

<sup>93</sup> Community and Family Services International et al. *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines* (October 2003), 87.

<sup>94</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 47.



participation in “track one,” “track two,” and “track three” levels of peace negotiations. Major obstacles to “track one” participation are 1) the high-level and exclusive nature of the process, 2) specific characteristics of the IDP population, such as marginalized social position or education level, and 3) disadvantages derived from the state of displacement, for example a lack of cohesion and difficulty in mobilizing the community.<sup>95</sup> Even where they have been involved in track one and two processes, IDPs still face difficulties participating effectively. IDP participation in “track two” negotiations has occurred mostly through joining broader coalitions, such as women’s associations. While “track three” or grassroots initiatives are important, it is rare that they impact peace negotiations at the national level.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the many obstacles to IDP participation in peace processes, there are a few positive examples. For example, the peace process in Guatemala in the 1980s illustrates the positive effects of direct participation by forced migrants. The “Comisiones Permanentes” (Permanent Commissions) served as a vehicle for direct negotiation between refugees and the government of Guatemala. This helped to ensure that solutions took into account refugees’ concerns and made the peace process more durable.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in Mali, conflict-affected civilians played an active role in peacemaking. After years of unsuccessful government efforts to negotiate peace, traditional decision-making activities and community meetings which were facilitated by Northern civil society leaders resulted in localized ceasefire agreements and ultimately, in an end to the violence and space for national reconciliation.<sup>98</sup>

The 2007 Brookings-Bern report provides recommendations to a variety of actors involved in peace processes, but for the purpose of this study, the recommendations to “track one” and to civil society and NGOs are most relevant:

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<sup>95</sup> The Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements, and Peacebuilding* (September 2007), 20.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-24.

<sup>97</sup> P. Worby, *Lessons learned from UNHCR’s involvement in the Guatemala refugee repatriation and reintegration programme (1987-1999)*, Sponsored by UNHCR’s Regional Bureau for the Americas and the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (December 1999); Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements and Peace-Building* (September 2007).

<sup>98</sup> C. Barnes, “Democratizing peacemaking processes: strategies and dilemmas for public participation,” *Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking* (*Accord* issue 13, 2002); K. Lode, “Mali’s peace process: context, analysis and evaluation,” *Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking* (*Accord* issue 13, 2002).

## **Including IDPs in peace processes – recommendations**

*To ‘track-one’ actors:*

- *Directly include where possible and appropriate legitimate representatives of displaced populations in formal peace negotiations, with particular attention to including not only refugee but also IDP representatives, and to ensuring gender balance*
- *Convene separate formal consultations on displacement-specific issues with representatives of displaced populations where their direct participation in peace negotiations is impossible or inappropriate*
- *Support ‘track-two’ and ‘track-three’ processes and guarantee no reprisals against any individuals or organizations that participate in these processes*
- *Ensure that the outcomes of ‘track-two’ and ‘track-three’ processes are taken into account and included in formal negotiations*
- *Include UNHCR and other relevant international agencies in ‘track-one’ negotiations where displacement issues are discussed*
- *Where possible and appropriate visit IDP camps to gain direct insights into the situation of IDPs*

*To NGOs and civil society actors including displaced people’s organizations:*

- *Establish democratic structures to nominate legitimate representatives of displaced populations to take part in formal ‘track-one’ negotiations or ‘track-two’ processes*
- *Consult with IDPs to develop a list of priority issues for the peace negotiations which are important to and supported by the IDP community*
- *Identify specific obstacles to the political mobilization of IDPs and develop strategies to overcome them*
- *Help establish or support civil society coalitions for peace through funding, training and capacity-building and work to ensure that these broad coalitions include displacement-relevant issues*
- *Encourage local-level conflict resolution mechanisms that include displaced populations*
- *Raise public awareness about the need to address displacement issues*
- *Monitor the inclusion of displacement issues in peace processes and call attention to the fact when they are not.*

The Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements, and Peacebuilding* (September 2007), 3-4.

In Angola, the international organization, Centre for Common Ground (CCG) found IDP participation to be a crucial aspect of peacebuilding even during conflict. CCG facilitated a variety of programs including theatre, dialogue workshops, radio and television programs, and conflict management training with the aim of building local conflict management capacity and IDP demands for peace.<sup>99</sup> An example of one such program can be found in the box below.

### ***IDP Participation in Peacebuilding***

“Over the last couple of years, the CCG has produced two radio soap operas in collaboration with two local theatre groups with Angolan technicians. The soap operas include conflict resolution techniques and other difficult issues affecting IDPs and Angolans in general. The thirty thematic episodes of *Vozes Que Falam* (Voices that Speak) were specifically developed for internally displaced people. They address issues including displacement, life in the camps and the city, land conflict, drug use, mines, physical abuse, rape, AIDS, child labour, generational conflicts, and water access. The programmes present alternatives to deal with these problems and manage or resolve conflicts non-violently. The second radio soap opera, *Coisas da Nossa Gente* (Things of our People) targets the entire Angolan population, IDPs included, and discusses issues affecting Angolans. Themes refer to corruption, deficient health structures, the poor education system, reintegration of demobilized soldiers, unemployment, domestic violence, AIDS, abortion, the right to political freedom, forced displacement, the UN Guiding Principles on Displacement, and so forth. The two soap operas have been broadcast and rebroadcast on the National Radio of Angola (RNA), reaching the whole country including UNITA-held territories, on Radio Ecclesia, the main independent radio station based in Luanda and on Radio Luanda Antena Comercial (LAC), a commercial station targeting youth.”

S. Utterwulghe, “Conflict Management in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Peacemaking and Peacebuilding Work among Angolan IDPs,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Oxford University, 2004): 229-230.

### **2.3.6 Development of national legal framework for protection of IDPs**

As with any efforts to extend the protection of IDPs, it is important that governments and others consult with IDPs during the development of legal protection frameworks, and include provisions for IDP participation in programs of return or resettlement. Often at the behest of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (RSG), certain governments have begun to undertake participatory activities with IDPs, or have created plans with provisions for doing so.

The government of Turkey, for example, developed the “Van Provincial Action Plan for Responding to IDP Needs,” which includes detailed mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders,

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<sup>99</sup> S. Utterwulghe, “Conflict Management in Complex Humanitarian Situations: Peacemaking and Peacebuilding Work among Angolan IDPs,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol. 17, no. 2 (Oxford University 2004): 222-242.

including IDPs, to consider their views and priorities.<sup>100</sup> The Plan of Action also includes provisions for including IDPs and NGOs in planning and monitoring, and utilizing their skills to transform IDPs “from passive recipients of assistance and services into active citizens involved in decision making processes.” This is a positive example of a civic benefit to IDPs and the Turkish state. In line with the Framework for National Responsibility, the Plan of Action includes provisions for strengthening the participation of women, and for sharing information about the Plan with displaced communities. However, despite the comprehensive planning document, there are indications that Turkish NGOs have been disappointed with the scope of their role.<sup>101</sup> Little or no research is available on IDPs’ perceptions of their role in the process; this would be a key area for future research.

Both Uganda and Angola have adopted national policies for IDPs which contain provisions regarding their participation in resettlement and other relevant processes.

The Angolan Norms on Resettlement of the Internally Displaced Populations, for example, requires that the provincial government ensure the active participation of displaced populations in the resettlement or return process. The norms, however, do not elaborate on how such participation is to be facilitated and whether displaced populations will be able to participate in all, or only some, aspects of resettlement and return. The Ugandan policy is more detailed in its provisions inviting the participation of IDPs. Section 2.3.1(iii) requires the Human Rights Promotion and Protection Sub Committee to work in collaboration with IDP representatives to find ways to promote respect for and protect the human rights of IDPs. Section 2.4(v) states that representatives of displaced women shall be consulted and may be invited to participate in meetings of the District Disaster Management Committees.<sup>102</sup>

In Georgia, a consultation process in the form of roundtables led by the IDP Women’s Network was also undertaken during the development of the country’s national policy. However, it is unclear to what degree these roundtables were able to influence the national policy. Moreover, it is not clear to what extent the government of Georgia supported or was willing to consider the conclusions of these roundtables. While the government established four “thematic working groups” with stakeholders including NGOs, UN, government and donors, the working groups were not designed to include IDPs.<sup>103</sup> Broadly speaking, there seems to be a lack of consultation with IDPs regarding the drafting of these documents as well as a lack of adequate language to ensure IDP participation in the relevant legal frameworks.

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<sup>100</sup> Government of Turkey, *Van Provincial Action Plan for Responding to IDP Needs*. Drafted by the Governorate of Van with the technical assistance of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2006).

<sup>101</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), “The engagement of Turkish NGOs: Recommendations on how to improve the dialogue and develop partnerships between NGOs and authorities on IDP issues,” (October 2006).

<sup>102</sup> J. Wyndham, “A Developing Trend: Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement.” *Human Rights Brief* (Winter 2006).

<sup>103</sup> R. Williams, “Report on Trip to Tbilisi, Georgia, 24-25 May 2006,” in file.

### **2.3.7 Mine action**

The importance of community involvement in mine action is outlined in the Bad Honnef Framework, initially adopted at the First International Conference of Experts in Bad Honnef, 23-24 June 1997.<sup>104</sup> The first of three central principles of the framework is participation of the affected communities:

Since the needs and aspirations of those people affected by mines and not the particular interests of the funders must be the starting point for all endeavours, Mine Action Programmes require the appropriate involvement of those affected, at all levels and from the beginning.<sup>105</sup>

This principle has since been adopted by agencies engaged in mine-clearing and mine education. For example, the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) began applying a Community Liaison (CL) model to mine action in Angola as early as the mid-1990s. The organization states: “We believe in working together with all actors to find the best solution to problems. The human subjects—the communities that live in mined areas or that have been driven from mined areas and wish to return—become key players within the prioritisation process.”<sup>106</sup>

#### ***Example of consultation during mine-action***

The “Task Impact Assessment” project, as developed by Norwegian People’s Aid in Angola, uses information gathered through interviews and other participatory activities with villagers to decide whether certain areas should be cleared, why or why not, and what the clearing priorities are among different villages. Maps that show the location of mines in Angola are rare, so the population is a particularly valuable source of information about suspected mined areas.

Activities are also designed to assess the impact of the de-mining (e.g., will it allow community members to cultivate a certain area?) and what complementary activities will take place if de-mining is carried out (e.g. will the state repair the road if it is de-mined?). The final phase of the program is designed to assess the real impact of the de-mining process (e.g., did people cultivate more? Were mine accidents actually reduced?).

P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 58.

<sup>104</sup> International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor Report 2001: Toward a Mine-Free World* (New York: Human Rights Watch, August 2001). [http://www.icbl.org/lm/2000/appendices/bad\\_honnef.html](http://www.icbl.org/lm/2000/appendices/bad_honnef.html)

<sup>105</sup> The Bad Honnef Framework, adopted by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), Co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize 1997. <http://www.apminebanconvention.org/index.php?id=424> .

<sup>106</sup> T. Carstairs, Mine Advisory Group (MAG), “Community Liaison in Mine Action: Partnerships for Growth,” *Landmines in Africa*, Issue 6.2, August 2002. Available at Mine Action Information Center (MAIC) at James Madison University, <http://maic.jmu.edu/journal/6.2/focus/timcarstairs/timcarstairs.htm>.

### **2.3.8 Livelihoods**

IDPs can and should play an active role in shaping activities aimed at improving their livelihoods and education level. While few studies focus on the participation of IDPs in decisions related to livelihoods, a study of refugees in Guinea, for example, explored how refugees have assisted in selecting the type of vocational training courses according to the population's interests and background (rural or urban, male or female, etc.).

“[In Lainé refugee camp], the first wave of refugees was mainly rural communities and their priorities were reading and writing. When new refugees arrived in the camp, they had completely different needs. They had technical skills and proposed tie-dye activities, soap making, among others. Some refugees were used to using telephones and sending emails! The urban women were interested in fashion and wanted hairdressers, and therefore a training course in hairstyling. The young were asking for IT classes and electrical engineering (...) Each training course that we offer responds to a request from the community. This is why some courses have closed down and other subjects have been started up.” -*JRS worker*

B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 88.

IDP participation in issues of livelihoods is not always easy to implement. For example, an Overseas Development Institute (ODI) study on supporting livelihoods reveals the complexity of livelihood-related programming due to 1) the wide range of mechanisms by which individuals secure sustainable livelihoods as well as 2) the diversity of “livelihood outcomes” pursued by various individual beneficiaries. “Thus, it is not only for reasons of empowerment that mean local consultation is necessary, but also for practical reasons in order to make programmes appropriate to each situation.”<sup>107</sup> However, the report also notes the challenge of working within funding restrictions that run counter to consultation and participatory programming, stating that “current funding structures for assistance do not allow beneficiaries to define entry points themselves. In practice, donors and government select entry points before beneficiaries can even be consulted.”<sup>108</sup>

### **2.3.9 Political processes – political parties, elections, referenda**

The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* assert that IDPs should not be discriminated against when exercising their right to participate in public and political affairs. This applies while they are displaced and also when they return or resettle. Guaranteeing IDPs' right to political participation is particularly critical in situations of protracted displacement.

<sup>107</sup> J. Schafer, “Supporting Livelihoods in Situations of Chronic Conflict and Political Instability: Overview of Conceptual Issues,” Working Paper No. 183 (London: Overseas Development Institute, December 2002), 33. [http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working\\_papers/wp183.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp183.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Previously identified obstacles to participation in political life include lack of documentation, discriminatory practices, inadequate arrangements for IDP voting and lack of information about measures taken to allow IDPs to vote.<sup>109</sup> Publications of the Brookings-Bern Project have recommended that authorities ensure that there are polling places in areas accessible to IDPs, put sufficient measures in place to allow absentee voting or voting in areas of temporary settlement, and provide timely information about these measures to IDPs and electoral officials.<sup>110</sup> IDPs should also be consulted when designing special electoral procedures to address their situation.<sup>111</sup>

Efforts surrounding the voting rights of IDPs displaced by Hurricane Katrina and their attempts to vote in the April 2006 mayoral elections may be an interesting area for future research. An advocacy group called The Advancement Project has done work surrounding the voting rights of IDPs displaced by Hurricane Katrina, including filing a lawsuit to try to force the state of Louisiana to provide satellite voting in places where large numbers of Katrina victims were temporarily living. The group also initiated a media campaign with MTV to inform displaced voters of ways of casting ballots from their temporary residences.<sup>112</sup> The successes and challenges faced in these efforts are worthy of further study to determine their utility in other displacement situations.

### **3. HOW TO: GOALS AND METHODS OF CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION**

#### **3.1 Setting Goals: Components of Effective Consultation and Participation**

##### **3.1.1 Clear purpose and expectations for consultation/participation process among all parties**

Participatory development manuals highlight the importance of having clear expectations and goals for the participatory process. This includes letting the population know ahead of time if certain decisions have already been made or are not subject to negotiation. To maintain realistic expectations, the population should be informed about how their contributions will be used and what effect they are likely to have.<sup>113</sup> They should also be told the limitations in the mandate and resources of the implementing agency.<sup>114</sup> This means that agencies carrying out participatory processes should be transparent about the degree to which programs can be tailored according to the views and priorities of the population; they should also let communities know when requests or concerns fall outside the agency's mandate or operational plan, or when they fail to attract

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<sup>109</sup> E. Mooney and B. Jarrah, *The Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons: The OSCE Region*, An Occasional Paper, The Brookings-SAIS Project on Internal Displacement (November 2004).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> For more information see: <http://www.advancementproject.org/>.

<sup>113</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 11.

<sup>114</sup> S. Harris, "Listening to the displaced: analysis, accountability and advocacy in action," *Forced Migration Review* no. 8 (2000); B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2004).

sufficient donor interest.<sup>115</sup> To that end, staff leading the consultations need to be aware of the mechanisms, limitations and scope of how the agency accesses and spends funds. When the priorities and concerns of affected populations are not reflected in subsequent programming – whatever the reason – it is likely to negatively affect the relationship between the population and the agency, and may even lead to conflict.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, it is easy for misunderstandings to occur when participatory exchanges are purely verbal, especially when one party is working through a translator.<sup>117</sup> Where appropriate, goals, agreements and information should be put in writing to ensure that expectations are clear. Where inappropriate, other culturally-relevant measures should be taken to ensure effective communication.

### **3.1.2 Results-oriented**

A critical component of effective participation is that it has the potential to actually affect the decision-making process. Participation is tightly bound with issues of power, and truly effective participation demands that some power be ceded to communities. This allows the process to be more than just acquiring approval for a decision or merely including stakeholders in the implementation and evaluation of that decision.<sup>118</sup> While it may seem an obvious point, it is worth emphasizing that:

The process should not be predetermined. If communities see that sharing their views has little to no impact on subsequent decisions and that power remains solely with the agency conducting participatory exercises, there will be little value for them. If power and decision making remain with humanitarian actors there may be no perceived value in participating.<sup>119</sup>

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Housing Authority of New Orleans held several required “consultation meetings” where community members were able to voice their concerns about a controversial plan to demolish 4500 public housing units. However, communities have seen few results from these meetings and there has been little substantive engagement with the authorities. Critics argue that the agency made no attempts to ensure participation: no transportation was provided, the meeting was held in New Orleans (while the majority of the displaced were outside the city) and during the week even though IDPs said the weekend was preferable, and there were few efforts to inform residents about the meeting.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, despite the community’s clearly-voiced wishes to avoid destruction of public housing and significant evidence that demolition is

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<sup>115</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2002).

<sup>116</sup> F. Grünwald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 59.

<sup>117</sup> I. Wall, “Where’s My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group, 2005: 5.

<sup>118</sup> M. Blagescu, et al, *Pathways to Accountability: A short guide to the GAP Framework* (One World Trust, 2005), 23.

<sup>119</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 37.

<sup>120</sup> J. A. Browne-Dianis, Prepared Statement of Judith A. Browne-Dianis, Esq., Co-Director, Advancement Project (statement before the Financial Services Committee Hearing to Examine Federal Housing Response to Hurricane Katrina, 6 February 2007).



unnecessary and costly, plans for demolition continue. As a result, community members have called the whole process a sham.<sup>121</sup>

### **3.1.3 Community involvement at every step of decision making**

Closely related to the requirement that some power be ceded to communities is the need for affected populations, such as IDPs, to be involved at every step of the decision making. The “Good Enough Guide” developed by the Emergency Capacity Building Project recommends that in emergencies, agencies should ask people as soon as possible what they want to see happen, rather than waiting to hold a meeting when major decisions may have already been made by others.<sup>122</sup> Where feasible, agencies should avoid top-down management. Of course, this is not always viable, nor is it always the response desired by an affected population. There are times when the trauma of events leading to displacement can trigger the need for an organized response by unaffected individuals.

### **3.1.4 Sufficient understanding of social, cultural and political context and recognition of power differentials**

For international agencies, history and experience working in a particular context usually translates into deeper knowledge of the social, cultural and general context of a particular area. They may also have had time to establish trust with the community, which will enable them to engage more easily in participatory activities during an emergency.<sup>123</sup> A history of working with a population will also enable them to better understand the power differentials within a community and to assess the role that leaders should play in participatory processes.

Certain NGOs, such as Community and Family Services International (CFSI) in the Philippines and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Angola emphasize the value in recognizing and including traditional leaders in participatory activities.<sup>124</sup> CFSI, moreover, advises agencies to recognize and include local military units in order to acknowledge their authority, avoid misunderstandings and coordinate efforts.<sup>125</sup>

However, while it may be appropriate to engage with leaders, it is also important to recognize that leaders or community representatives may not, in fact, accurately represent the concerns and priorities of a community. Giving these leaders control over resources and decision-making may only serve to entrench the marginalization of already marginalized groups. This will vary by

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<sup>121</sup> J. Cass and P. Whoriskey, “New Orleans to Raze Public Housing: Many Units Closed since Katrina to be Demolished, Despite Protests,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 2006.

<sup>122</sup> Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB, February 2007).

<sup>123</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 85.

<sup>124</sup> Community and Family Services International et al., *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines* (October 2003), 69, 95; P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 5, 63.

<sup>125</sup> Community and Family Services International, et al, *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines*, October 2003: 69

context, making it extremely important to understand the power dynamics in a given community.<sup>126</sup> This is equally true in peace processes and political participation. Rather than encouraging participation of leaders, it may be useful to focus on selecting representatives according to “whether they truly [represent] the diversity of public interest and opinion and whether they [are] able to generate a broad social consensus in support of the process.”<sup>127</sup>

### **3.1.5 Programs targeted to ensure involvement of all stakeholders who perceive themselves to be affected**

In some cases, it may be important to include consultation and participatory activities with both displaced and non-displaced communities. Engaging in consultation and participation with host communities may help to maintain a positive relationship between the displaced and their hosts.<sup>128</sup> Joint activities with displaced and non-displaced may also be practical in situations where the displaced are stigmatized and are therefore reluctant to identify themselves as IDPs. In Colombia, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has successfully used a participatory approach that incorporated displaced and non-displaced populations, helping the displaced to integrate into the host community and reducing unintended stigmatization.<sup>129</sup>

It is noteworthy that in Colombia, host communities – who often host IDPs directly in their homes and provide them with assistance – perceive this hosting as a type of active participation in humanitarian action. Further research on these non-traditional forms of participation among IDPs and host communities would be useful. While secondary stakeholders are an integral part of the equation and should be included in consultations, this could also pose difficulties for agencies and for the affected community. For example, if consulted, a host community may inform agencies that they do not want to be hosting IDPs in their homes, or even in the area.

#### ***Example of participation of non-displaced stakeholders***

“When the authorities approached Lainé village, a process of consultation was initiated within the village itself. The elders, who play an advisory role, consulted with the ‘*enfants du village*’ (people born in Lainé, currently living in urban centres) about their view on the advantages and disadvantages of hosting the refugees. One person noted that ‘*enfants du village*’ (...) *are the village’s educated children (...) they notice things that might escape us.*”

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<sup>126</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 11.

<sup>127</sup> C. Barnes, “Democratizing peacemaking processes: strategies and dilemmas for public participation,” *Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking* (*Accord* issue 13, 2002); K. Lode, “Mali’s peace process: context, analysis and evaluation,” *Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking* (*Accord* issue 13, 2002).

<sup>128</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 60.

<sup>129</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 62.

Once the community had decided to host the refugees, an agreement was signed between the UNHCR and Lainé district, in which the villagers' conditions were laid down. The twelve clauses of the agreement covered questions such as water points and a health centre, as well as setting out the obligations of the villagers, such as the amount of land to be made available for the refugee camp, and for what length of time etc.). The elders and the young people identified to the authorities the land which could be used. Before the refugees arrived, the youth council and the elders called a second general assembly in order to inform the village of their decision and the site chosen for the refugee camp, and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages with the assistance of professionals in the capital. Before the refugees arrived, the elders requested that local traditions should be respected, so a sacrifice was made which was provided by the authorities. "(...) *We needed to ask our ancestors to protect us, to keep conflict out of the village, seeing as we were going to receive people who were fleeing war.*" Only once this ceremony had been held, could preparations commence for the refugees' arrival.

B. G. Sokpoh and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 61. (Italics in original.)

### **3.1.6 Trained people to carry out consultation/participation activities**

Whenever available, trained and experienced staff should carry out participatory activities. In fact, some agencies see this as crucial to the success of participatory programs, as it can have a significant influence on the way crisis-affected populations will respond to participatory measures.<sup>130</sup>

Manuals for participation in development observe that any process to solicit views runs the risk of also eliciting tensions and conflict; for this reason, they recommend the use of a facilitator trained in participatory techniques and conflict management in order to guide the group.<sup>131</sup> The use of local facilitators and co-facilitators and/or female facilitators may also result in more culturally appropriate or gender-sensitive methods.<sup>132</sup>

Despite these recommendations, an absence of specially-trained employees need not preclude all participatory approaches. Consultations and other participatory exercises can be carried out responsibly, drawing on local knowledge and keeping in mind the safety of all participants. There was lively debate around this issue of *who* should conduct a consultation at the November 2007 Brookings-Bern meetings. Some participants at the meetings felt it would not be feasible to

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<sup>130</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 93; Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003), 7.6, Annex 2; J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka* (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 84.

<sup>131</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 11.

<sup>132</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003), 7.6.

train all field staff, and indeed that not all staff would be personally or professionally suited to the task. It was suggested that agencies train teams of people who specialize in leading consultations. Others felt that “departmentalizing” consultations would have negative impacts and asserted that all staff should be trained in methods of consultation and participatory programming.

### **3.1.7 Effective coordination among agencies and groups**

Agencies working in displaced communities – including IDP associations and other organizations – should try to coordinate their efforts and activities in order to build confidence and trust rather than confusion among communities. This will also help to avoid the phenomenon of over-participation or “participation fatigue.”<sup>133</sup> (For more information on over-participation, see “Risks involved in participation,” below).

In countries like Colombia, where there are numerous IDP associations, women’s groups and other community-based organizations, coordination among these groups is critical and may itself be considered as a way of strengthening IDP participation. Coordination can help to avoid duplication of efforts and over-concentration of aid and can allow resources to be used more effectively.<sup>134</sup>

There are a variety of participatory methodologies and techniques, along with manuals and toolkits geared toward selecting and using them.<sup>135</sup> Two of the most comprehensive guides – UNHCR’s *Toolkit for Participatory Assessment* and IASC’s “Guidance Note” in *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action* – are referenced frequently in the sections that follow. Most of the manuals examined for this study emphasize the value of being flexible and informal in approaching methodology. While there can be no one set of mechanisms to employ

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<sup>133</sup> Community and Family Services International, et al, *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines* (October 2003), 80; J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka* ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 86; V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 19.

<sup>134</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 78; Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery/NGO Impact Initiative. *NGO Impact Initiative: An Assessment by the International Humanitarian NGO Community* (New York, October 2006), 3.

<sup>135</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006); IASC, *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action* (October 2007); Save the Children, *So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice* (2003); N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner’s Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation et al. (December 2003); K. Evans et al., *Guide to Participatory Tools for Forest Communities*, Center for International Forestry Research (Jakarta, Indonesia, 2006); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003); ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006); Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB, February 2007). American Refugee Committee International, “Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid: A Participatory Tool Kit,” *Gender-Based Violence in Conflict-Affected Settings*. (Minneapolis, MN: ARC International, 2005).

for any given situation or given population, the following guidelines set out some basic starting points.

### **3.1.8 General guidance on participatory activities**

General principles that apply to participatory activities may include the following:

- Use multiple techniques in order to access different audiences
- Make it easy for people who are busy or working to get involved by holding events at convenient times or providing information that can be accessed easily at various times of day.
- Use accessible languages and avoid jargon
- Consider using both formal and informal settings

Another general guideline is that participation is a continuous process, and consultative mechanisms can be employed at any and all stages of a project. In line with development literature, primary stakeholders should be identified and invited to contribute throughout the project cycle, beginning with the design of a project and continuing through implementation. Evaluation and feedback are also important in order to allow agencies to resolve problems. In their manual on participation for bank projects, the African Development Bank suggests that:

Participation should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-off exercise (or series of exercises). Accordingly, stakeholder participation can be incorporated in all aspects of project design, management and implementation, and at any point in a project's life.<sup>136</sup>

UNHCR emphasizes that displaced people should remain in the process from the beginning to the end as well as be “informed of how the information they provide is being used and of any follow-up actions taken.” This enables agencies to identify and replicate good practice, as well as quickly rectify any problems – something with obvious benefits for both the affected population and the agency. The Brookings-Bern meetings in November 2007 found that participation was weakest in the areas of monitoring and evaluation. “The inclusion of IDPs in monitoring and evaluation of programs is an important, and largely untapped, resource.”<sup>137</sup>

At the Brookings-Bern meetings in November 2007, the UNHCR case study presented, “Participatory Assessments in West Darfur,” reiterated this point: “The views of IDPs should be obtained throughout all stages of planning, implementing, and monitoring protection and programme activities.” Not only is this critical for the assistance projects, ongoing consultation also facilitates greater rapport and understanding of the IDPs’ situations. “Regular contact with

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<sup>136</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 6.

<sup>137</sup> Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, “Consulting IDPs: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” (meeting on Consultation Mechanisms for Internally Displaced Persons, Geneva, Switzerland, February 2008).

IDPs enhances depth of understanding of protection concerns of different groups in the community and facilitates more focused discussions in the consultation process.”<sup>138</sup>

## 3.2 Participants in Consultative Processes

Two important questions that should be considered regarding participants are: *Who should participate?* and *How should they be identified?*

### **3.2.1 Who should participate?**

#### ***All groups of IDPs***

Manuals and handbooks on participation recognize that for obvious practical reasons, not all stakeholders can participate directly – representatives must be selected. However, if only leaders or only men are consulted, the views and rights of traditionally marginalized groups may not be considered.<sup>139</sup> This is of particular concern for internally displaced populations, who may already be predominantly from among the marginalized groups in a society, such as women and children, or ethnic and religious minorities. Organizers should ensure, where possible, that the views of vulnerable groups from within these already vulnerable populations are included. However, it should be acknowledged that this often runs counter to the need to respect local cultures, and agencies need to work to find a balance between these competing values. Furthermore, there are risks involved in facilitating participation among marginalized groups and consultations should be approached with care and always prioritize the safety of IDPs.

#### ***Representatives or “champions” of IDPs***

Representatives of the displaced such as NGOs and human rights groups may also be valuable sources of information, though their views should not be seen as substitute for the views of displaced persons themselves. In the context of development, DFID observes:

“Sometimes, if a new activity is being developed in an area where the poor have not previously been involved in development activity, it may be difficult for them to participate directly in a workshop. In this case champions, such as representatives from locally-based NGOs or social development consultants, should undertake participatory assessments with the poor, bring the results of that exercise to the workshop, and take the results of the workshop back to those same communities.”<sup>140</sup>

In addition to the difficulties and dangers participation might pose to affected communities, there is also the possibility that they will not want to be directly involved in consultation or participation exercises. A group may request to have a representative deliver their message to the relevant government or agency on their behalf.

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<sup>138</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>139</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006), 5.

<sup>140</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003), 4.4.

### *Host communities*

Both UNHCR's Participatory Assessment Tool and IASC's IDP protection guide advise agencies to begin consultations with "joint group discussions" that include both IDPs and local residents.<sup>141</sup> Consulting with the local population from the outset may be a useful way to sidestep resentment among host communities that are too often unable to access assistance and unable to communicate their own needs and concerns to agencies on the ground. Consulting with host communities is also beneficial for agencies, especially in cases of urban displacement, where the displaced population has "merged" with the local population. In these cases, establishing a dialogue with local leaders is often a prerequisite to creating "effective communication channels" and guaranteeing "an inclusive approach."<sup>142</sup>

### **3.2.2 How should participants be selected?**

The method of selecting participants is also important and efforts should be made to ensure that the process is as clear and transparent as possible. NGOs and local organizations may be key sources of information regarding who should be included, and there may also be value in some degree of self-selection (for example, local IDP associations to select individual participants.)<sup>143</sup> Of course, both of these methods risk that the more powerful members of the community – often those who are educated, healthy, active in civil society, and even in positions of authority - will get preference. It should be recognized that local organizations may already represent a certain strata of society, and therefore 'self-selection' would start from a pre-selected segment of the community.

One method of selecting participants involves social targeting, or seeking to identify the most socially or economically vulnerable and ensuring that they participate. People can be targeted for participation according to, for example, age, gender, religion, health status, disabilities, or educational level.<sup>144</sup> UNHCR's and IASC's guidelines promote a concept known as "mapping diversity," a participatory method of determining the demographic, socioeconomic and other relevant characteristics of stakeholders in order to ensure that no particular subset of the community is excluded.<sup>145</sup> However, these methods may be resisted by more powerful individuals and groups in a community – potentially putting already vulnerable groups at greater risk.

"The empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups implies major changes in attitudes and behavior in the wider population. Projects that work with their target

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<sup>141</sup> Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action*. (October 2007); UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006). .

<sup>142</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 9.

<sup>143</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 11.

<sup>144</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006).

<sup>145</sup> Interagency Standing Committee (IASC). *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action*. October 2007: 54-56; UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 20-22.

population in isolation of other more powerful members of society fail to acknowledge this fact and risk creating social division and conflict”.<sup>146</sup>

Altering the existing social structures, which may already be weakened by displacement, could also be harmful for the affected population. In some cases, it may be in the community’s interest to maintain traditional leadership that is recognized by a broader segment of the regional population. Substantial knowledge of the displaced community is needed to determine the best approach.

### **3.3 Consultative Mechanisms**

#### **3.3.1 Dissemination of information**

Information provision is one stage on the participatory spectrum. IDPs need timely and accurate information about factors that affect their future, including information related to housing and livelihoods.<sup>147</sup> They should also have information about future activities surrounding return and resettlement. They may also want information about, for example, how they will be able to use skills and training they have received while displaced once they return to their homes<sup>148</sup> as well as administrative and judicial procedures.<sup>149</sup>

Following Hurricane Katrina, there was an acute shortage of accurate information provided to IDPs, which led both to wasted efforts and intense frustration among displaced communities. Reports indicate that the US’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) did a poor job of communicating with the displaced about procedures for compensation and deadlines for leaving trailer parks. In some cases they attempted to force residents to leave trailer parks without communicating any information to them other than that they must leave immediately.<sup>150</sup> An Oxfam America study of Gulf Coast communities affected by Hurricane Katrina emphasized that:

“Survivors need to clearly understand their options so they can plan their recovery efforts accordingly, both to minimize continued trauma and to efficiently allocate their resources—both time and money. Federal and state agencies should create stronger relationships with trusted nonprofit and grassroots organizations, and rely upon the community expertise of these organizations to ensure that vulnerable populations understand and access the benefits for which they qualify.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 72.

<sup>147</sup> I. Wall, “Where’s My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005), 4.

<sup>148</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 70.

<sup>149</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 63.

<sup>150</sup> P. Whoriskey, “‘We called it Hurricane FEMA’: Trailer Park Was Quickly Emptied,” *Washington Post*, 12 March 2007, A01.

<sup>151</sup> Oxfam America, *Forgotten Communities, Unmet Promises: An unfolding tragedy on the Gulf Coast* (August 2006), 43.



Post-tsunami evaluations found that media, including whiteboards, posters, radio, and newspapers were accessible to IDPs and were efficient vehicles for disseminating information.<sup>152</sup> However, IDPs may not have radios or access to other mass media such as newspapers or the internet. Literacy rates also will have an effect on the type of media that should be used to disseminate information. At the same time, it should not be assumed that IDPs in developed countries have better access to media or are more literate. Indeed, a report on the IDP population in Mississippi and Louisiana found many IDPs who could not access telephones or internet media and some who could not read,<sup>153</sup> while a study in Indonesia revealed a literacy rate of over 90 percent for both genders.<sup>154</sup>

In addition to mass media, there may be cases where direct communication between IDPs and agencies is necessary to ensure that IDPs receive accurate and complete information. An International Medical Corps study of IDPs in Mississippi and Louisiana study found that passive dissemination like posting press releases and advertisements in local newspapers was not an effective way of reaching IDPs. They recommended opening a service center with an active field-based outreach program to provide IDPs in trailer parks with more information about services available to them.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, the Representative to the Secretary General (RSG) recommended that the Turkish government engage civil society to make direct contact with IDPs to provide them with information about the compensation process.<sup>156</sup>

Information dissemination remains critical and beneficial in situations other than humanitarian assistance. Peacebuilding missions in West Africa have found public information campaigns to be effective in explaining their mandates and building support for the mission. Returning refugees and IDPs are among audiences targeted by these campaigns. While public information campaigns have been standard in UN peacebuilding missions for some time, the public information campaigns used by the UN Mission in Sierra Leona (UNAMSIL) and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have been extremely innovative. UNAMSIL has used theatre, dance and music performed in local languages and dialects to explain its mandate and workings of its disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) program.<sup>157</sup> UNMIL partnered with mobile phone networks to send SMS-text messages to Liberian mobile phone users on the issue of rape and gender-based violence, reaching 500,000 of Liberia's post-war

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<sup>152</sup> I. Wall, "Where's My House"? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005); I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka*, (Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006).

<sup>153</sup> International Medical Corps, *Displaced in America: Health Status Among Internally Displaced Persons in Louisiana and Mississippi Travel Trailer Parks: A Global Perspective* (August 2006), 33.

<sup>154</sup> I. Wall, "Where's My House"? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005), 6.

<sup>155</sup> International Medical Corps, *Displaced in America: Health Status Among Internally Displaced Persons in Louisiana and Mississippi Travel Trailer Parks: A Global Perspective* (August 2006), 33.

<sup>156</sup> W. Kälin, "Conclusions and Recommendations from the Representative's Working Visit to Turkey," 28 September-1 October 2006.

<sup>157</sup> C. Hunt, "Public information as a mission critical component of West African peace operations," *Conflict Trends* (Accord: March 2006), 35.

population of 3 million.<sup>158</sup> Such methods could be further explored for their utility in reaching IDPs in other contexts.

While information about returns and resettlement is important to IDPs, information campaigns on these issues should be carefully designed to avoid pressuring IDPs in any way. In Guinea, for example, a refugee told the ALNAP researchers:

“They tell us that repatriation is voluntary but they also inform us that from a certain date there will be no more help for us here. We are already no longer selected for certain income generating projects or agricultural programs. We don’t really have any choice.”<sup>159</sup>

### **How Do I Get A House?: The Galle Shelter Outreach Initiative**

“This campaign was initiated in response to a number of problems being experienced by beneficiaries and by those seeking to assist them. OCHA, which initiated the campaign, aimed to:

- Dispel myths regarding permanent housing, transitional shelters, and tents;
- Reduce the number of affected families living in substandard housing;
- Inform tsunami affected families living with host families of other housing options;
- Ensure that tsunami affected families know their eligibility for permanent housing and transitional shelters.

Aid agencies came up with a small scale — but comprehensive — mass public information campaign. The campaign’s centerpiece was a simple leaflet entitled “How Do I Get a House,” which used a mixture of diagrams, Q&As, and simple text to talk readers through some of the key housing policy principles. The focus was practical, addressing issues such as “what to do if you are still in a tent.” The leaflets were accompanied by a radio series.

The most innovative part of this campaign, however, was a week-long open-house event at the District Secretary’s office, during which beneficiaries could ask questions, register for assistance, and talk to governments and aid agencies working in shelter on how to access assistance and determine which assistance was most appropriate for them.

Preparation for the open house began weeks before, with the design of the leaflet. Rather than outsource this work, OCHA and other aid agencies worked out what each could contribute and coordinated the work. The lead shelter agencies and government prepared the leaflet’s content, which was designed and made into a poster by an in-house designer at CHF. World Vision funded printing and OCHA managed the translation, and distribution was undertaken by all aid agencies and government officials involved.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>159</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 70.

Internews, an NGO that aims to improve access to information by supporting independent media and promoting open communications, handled the design and broadcast of radio announcement regarding the event, and aid agencies working in shelter provided one person to talk to beneficiaries for the open house event. The open house received a very large response, with queues out the door. “There were so many people it was scary,” reported one aid worker.

I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka* (Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006), 42.

### **3.3.2 Meetings and other participatory events**

Consultation and direct involvement in planning and decision-making fall further along the participation spectrum, and often (though not always) include participatory events where people can share their views about needs and priorities. Focus groups and workshops, visioning, and surveys have all been used successfully by humanitarian and development practitioners to understand the views and needs of communities.

An NGO-supported series of participatory meetings called the “Unified New Orleans Plan” resulted in several large meetings – some with more than 2,500 people – for residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina in 21 US cities. The four cities with the largest numbers of Katrina-displaced were electronically linked through satellite technology. Participants broke into smaller groups of 8-10 participants with a facilitator, who collected the group’s ideas at computers found at every table. These comments were reviewed simultaneously by additional facilitators and then reported back to the larger group without delay. In the final segment of the meetings, participants used keypads to prioritize and confirm the ideas in order to develop a plan for action.<sup>160</sup> This is obviously a resource intensive method, but one that provided significant amounts of information about the priorities of IDPs dispersed across the country, reporting back to the displaced with little delay.

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<sup>160</sup> Unified New Orleans Plan, Preliminary Report of Community Congress II, 2 December 2006; R. B. Olshansky, *New Orleans Planning Update: The Unified New Orleans Plan*, Planetizen: Urban Planning and Development Network, 11 December 2006; M. Krupa, “Citizens say yes to Unified New Orleans Plan,” *The Times Picayune*, 21 January 2007.

### ***Example of a successful participatory event - Colombia***

“Another important element, in respect of participation in the design phase, emerged during the new Bellavista housing development and distribution process. This programme, attached to the Presidency of the Republic and managed by a professional highly experienced in this type of project, used workshops-meetings to which the future inhabitants were invited. At the workshops, they designed model houses and plans of the community (e.g. where the port would be, where to store the barges, where to locate the church, what materials to use, where house windows and doors would be located). The inhabitants plans were reviewed by construction professionals and the options that emerged presented at two ‘open assemblies’ (cabildos), before the choice of new housing plan was voted on. The project manager’s experience and the fact that the Presidency of the Republic took ownership of the programme were two elements contributing to the adoption of effective participatory tools.”

V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

Information on several participatory methods is provided below.<sup>161</sup>

*Participant observation* is an approach based on everyday interactions, assessments, and informal conversations with community members. While this method is unstructured, agency staff may find that participant observation reveals program flaws or protection concerns that were not recorded in formal consultations. UNHCR notes that this method may “uncover structural problems in the accessibility of services (e.g. food distributions, health and police posts, behaviour of security guards controlling refugee access to UNHCR and implementing partner offices) or interpersonal behaviour/group dynamics within the community... Observation sites can include playgrounds, classrooms, firewood collection areas, markets, transportation services in the case of repatriations, entrances to UNHCR offices, and queues for nonfood items

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<sup>161</sup> This list is not comprehensive, but attempts to outline some of the basic mechanisms employed. For a more thorough discussion, please refer to the following: UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006); IASC, *Protection of Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action* (October 2007); Save the Children, *So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice* (2003); N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner’s Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation et al. (December 2003); K. Evans et al., *Guide to Participatory Tools for Forest Communities*, Center for International Forestry Research (Jakarta, Indonesia, 2006); Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003); ALNAP, *Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners* (draft) (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003); African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001); Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006); Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB, February 2007); American Refugee Committee International, “Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid: A Participatory Tool Kit,” *Gender-Based Violence in Conflict-Affected Settings*. (Minneapolis, MN: ARC International, 2005). (Detailed information on “charrettes,” citizens juries, consensus conferencing, “delphis,” “planning cells,” and other less commonly known participatory methods that have been successfully used in public participation and consultation regarding policies can be found in N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner’s Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation et al. (December 2003).)

to check conditions and arrangements for older persons, pregnant women, etc. Observations can also be carried out at locations where partners deliver services, especially in urban areas, e.g. HIV counselling centres, childcare centres, schools.”<sup>162</sup>

*Surveys* can be used to collect information before, during, or after a project. Information gathered in surveys may be used to establish baseline data and can also support more qualitative information collected in focus group discussions and interviews. While surveys can be used to gather a great deal of information from a large number of people in a short time, it may be difficult to reach people who can accurately represent the variety of views in a community. Critics of surveys note that they should not be taken as the equivalent of consultation, and that they may gather information without encouraging participation in the process.<sup>163</sup>

*Focus groups*<sup>164</sup> are typically used to solicit information and views from IDPs in order to guide planning and needs assessments. DFID’s manual highlights the benefits of focus groups including “high face validity” (that is, the technique can measure what it says it will: people’s opinions); the ability to participate in a natural and relaxed setting, which may encourage openness and candor from participants; the opportunity to probe unanticipated responses; and that they are relatively quick and low-cost.<sup>165</sup> UNHCR suggests conducting separate focus groups for men, women, boys, and girls in order to better understand the protection needs of various members of the community. It also notes the usefulness of centering these sessions around particular themes or questions.<sup>166</sup> It is best to have trained staff to facilitate these discussions in order to avoid leading questions.

*Visioning* is a technique employed most often during the planning and design phase of activities to assist stakeholders in developing a shared vision of the future. It has been used in a development context in activity planning (addressing such questions as what will be the end result of the activity and how will people’s lives be improved as a result of it?), organizational change (addressing questions such as what kind of organization do we want, how will it be structured? How will effectiveness be improved?) and in formulating strategies for future action.<sup>167</sup>

*Story Boarding* is another method used in group consultations. This can be valuable in that it provides a space for displaced persons to tell their stories, and is effective in communicating affected persons’ needs to a broader group of aid agency staff.<sup>168</sup> Storyboarding was used in UNHCR’s consultation process with refugees in Bangladesh. According to the report, “refugees worked in small groups and drew pictures of their experiences of persecution in Myanmar, flight to Bangladesh and life in the refugee camps. These were presented to a larger audience,

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<sup>162</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 25.

<sup>163</sup> J. Darcy and C. Hoffman, *According to Need? Needs assessment and Decision Making in the Humanitarian Sector*, HPG Report (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 64.

<sup>164</sup> For more details on this method, see UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 27-28.

<sup>165</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1 (March 2003), 3.4.

<sup>166</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 27-28.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.1.

<sup>168</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007), 5.

including UNHCR staff and non-governmental organizations.”<sup>169</sup> This method may be particularly useful when the themes of a focus group are difficult to discuss.

### **3.3.3 Requesting more information and initiating complaints**

While participation during the planning and design phase allows communities to influence programs from the outset, the evaluation and complaints mechanisms are equally important parts of any participatory process.<sup>170</sup> Effective participatory processes should include methods for populations to request additional information, contact agencies who have engaged with them, and initiate complaints about the participation and associated programs. At the very least, participants should be provided with the names of people to contact to follow up in case they have personal questions.<sup>171</sup> Organized complaints mechanisms provide a means to identify problems and fine-tune programs and to receive current information on people’s concerns.<sup>172</sup>

#### ***Example of a good complaints process***

“Shortly after the tsunami, the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission — already a long established and well-recognized institution — set up a Disaster Relief Monitoring Unit [DRMU] to handle complaints and investigate concerns about tsunami response. DRMU’s main focus is the complaints process, through which beneficiaries can ask questions about eligibility for assistance, report potential cases of corruption among local officials, or complain if they have been left off a beneficiary list or feel their housing situation has been wrongly assessed. ... the DRMU implemented an extremely effective ongoing outreach campaign to explain its work. So far, the unit has received around 17,000 complaints. After a complaint is received, DRMU sends an acknowledgement of receipt. The complaint is then investigated, usually through local government structures, although a team will investigate independently if necessary. According to its figures, between 55 and 60 percent of cases have been successfully resolved. A number of complaints, however, were about NGOs and, in particular, international NGOs (INGOs). In accountability terms, this is one of the most interesting aspects of the unit’s work. When a complaint is received about an INGO, the DRMU informs the complainant that the matter is being taken up. It then asks the organization if it is aware of a problem or if it has investigated it. DRMU also provides updates in a weekly meeting open to all I/NGOs, which can also bring up issues of concern. ‘When people complain about a certain INGO, we told them and quite often ended up mediating between the INGO and the community.’ The preferred solution, of course, is for the INGO to resolve the problem itself. But, if not, the DRMU does not hesitate to make the charges public in the media. ‘We had a complaint that an

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>170</sup> Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB, February 2007).

<sup>171</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 14.

<sup>172</sup> I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka*, (Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006), 23.

INGO in Trincomalee was delaying implementation of housing projects. I spoke to the head of the organization, who said that there was a problem and that they were dealing with it. But we continued to receive complaints so we wrote them an official letter and published it in the papers. The INGO said its local representative was inefficient. But their excuses were so lame. Other INGOs are doing a good job, so why can't they? We know these things are hard, but we cannot accept excuses.' In its media work, the DRMU is careful to be positive as well as negative, releasing statements praising organizations that quickly respond to problems. 'We are happy to use the media. If people do well, we give them credit, and we praise them.' Overall, respect for the DRMU's work is almost universal, and I/NGOs have offered considerable support for its work. Oxfam, for example, funded local Human Rights Commission offices, providing them with additional staff. The DRMU has also found that NGOs are using it to register complaints — both officially and unofficially — about the government. In most case, it investigates unofficially and mediates. 'We resolve a lot of things on a personal level.'"

I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka*, (Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006), 26.

## **4. LIMITATIONS, RISKS, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

### **4.1 Recognizing Limitations: Factors Affecting the Approach Used**

Many factors related to the context, agency capacity, and population will affect the approach that is used to consult with displaced communities, and to a certain extent may limit the ability to reach the goals detailed in the section above. Factors which may shape the approaches used include demographics and other characteristics of the community; for example, an individual's gender, age, education level, and cultural and religious traditions should be considered.<sup>173</sup> In addition to intrinsic and cultural factors, IDPs may be affected by the security context and events surrounding their displacement to a degree that limits their ability or desire to participate. In addition, the affected population may not be interested in participation if they do not perceive it to correspond to their own priorities. The relationship between the implementing agency and the population will also affect participation, as will characteristics of the implementing agency such as its ability to access the population (e.g. women and non-camp populations may be more difficult to access), as well as its resources, mandate, areas of expertise and history of work in an area.<sup>174</sup> The organization's commitment to consultation and participation at the highest level is a major factor as well. In cases where there is not an explicit recognition of participation's importance, staff may be less likely to become engaged and feel that it is a worthwhile process.

<sup>173</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 19.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 52; V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 93.

“It’s difficult for UNHCR to admit that they don’t like dealing with refugees. It’s draining that you can’t solve their problems and that they take a long time to tell their stories. We’re not sufficiently in tune with them; we assume they’re always the same. From an organizational perspective, there’s not enough positive reinforcement of these skills. Any senior manager would cut Community Services first; we don’t put much importance on it.”<sup>175</sup>

Factors related to the aid agency, to the displaced community, and to the relationship between them will all play a role in how participation is approached.

#### **4.1.1 Social fragmentation, psychological distress, and physical condition**

The effects of displacement may include social fragmentation, psychological distress, and/or physical wounds, which may leave IDPs unable to participate or uninterested in engagement. When displaced persons initially arrive in camps or other destinations, they may be physically and psychologically drained. Participation during this stage may be difficult, though not impossible. Agencies should be sensitive to IDPs’ capability and interest in participation, recognizing that participation has the potential to intensify negative feelings. As an NGO worker in Sri Lanka told the ALNAP team, IDPs “may not want to be a community especially if they’re traumatized; they may wish to retain their private world. As far as I’m concerned, herding people together is another kind of trauma.”<sup>176</sup>

Following the Bojayá massacre in Colombia, IDPs arriving at shelters demonstrated little interest in participating in activities related to housing construction, livelihood activities, or return. The trauma caused by the loss of their land, homes and family members left them with “no plan for the future and no will to construct one.”<sup>177</sup> Similarly, a participant at the Brookings-Bern meetings in November 2007 noted the reluctance of tsunami-affected communities to engage with aid agencies in the wake of the disaster. However, after a period of time, the displaced and others affected were interested in participating in the recovery. It is not uncommon for conflict-displaced to have been physically assaulted, sexually abused, or otherwise traumatized in their flight, thus impacting their capacity for and interest in participation.<sup>178</sup> Nonetheless, IDPs’ desire to participate and be consulted is likely to vary widely in each situation; if approached with sensitivity, there may be benefits to consultation, even in initial stages.

#### **4.1.2 Access to population**

Access to an IDP population will influence the participatory processes, and may be affected by factors that have little to do with the population, such as geography, weather, and relative

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<sup>175</sup> B. Wigley, “The State of UNHCR’s Organization Culture,” (Geneva: UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, May 2005).

<sup>176</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002).

<sup>177</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 89.

<sup>178</sup> Linda Kreitzer, “Liberian Refugee Women: A Qualitative Study of Their Participation in Planning Camp Programmes,” *International Social Work*, vol. 45 no. 1 (2002): 45-58.



security.<sup>179</sup> Access may also be affected by religion, culture, gender, age, or various combinations of these factors. For example, it may be more difficult to conduct participatory activities with women in a traditional Muslim society.<sup>180</sup> Such a situation might call for all-female groups, and/or women facilitators.

### ***Camp versus non-camp populations***

Whether the population is in a camp or non-camp setting will also affect the way they can be engaged in participatory activities. Simply establishing contact is more difficult with non-camp populations, and particularly difficult if IDPs are deliberately hiding.<sup>181</sup> In addition to the obvious logistical difficulties that engaging with IDPs in hiding may pose, the security risks of encouraging participation in this case should be carefully evaluated. Participation may put IDPs who are hiding at risk rather than provide overall benefits.

To avoid stigmatization or security threats, agencies might consider carrying out participatory activities with both displaced and non-displaced populations. Other methods recommended by UNHCR “include working through existing community structures, such as religious groups, youth groups, health facilities, community-based organizations, and local NGOs. Through these groups, access to the wider urban community can gradually be established.”<sup>182</sup> However, wider access does not necessarily include displaced populations who may not have established ties to local organizations.

Geographical fragmentation adds additional challenges to participation. In cases of wide population dispersal, creative responses are needed to consult with the displaced. Following Hurricane Katrina, for example, the displaced population was spread across the United States, making participatory activities more difficult, but hardly impossible. IDPs from New Orleans have driven hundreds of miles to attend meetings about the future of their neighborhoods.<sup>183</sup> In other cases, simultaneous meetings of thousands of IDPs were held in multiple US cities and linked via satellite.<sup>184</sup> While this technique is not applicable for most IDP situations, it does indicate the importance of creative thinking to overcome practical obstacles.

### ***Remote location communities***

The most marginalized communities are often displaced in extremely desolate areas, and are furthest from local infrastructure and international aid agency offices. For example, Iraqis of Palestinian origin became one of the most vulnerable groups in the country after the 2003 invasion. Palestinians from Iraq were displaced to the most barren stretches of land: along the Iraqi-Syrian border, in the ‘no man’s land’ of the Iraqi-Jordanian border, and in the eastern desert of Jordan. These areas are prone to extreme temperatures, sandstorms, and are entirely dependent upon food and water shipments.<sup>185</sup> According to a report from IRIN (Humanitarian News and

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<sup>179</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 82.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 60.

<sup>182</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 9.

<sup>183</sup> K. Shevory, “One Path to Rebirth in New Orleans,” *The New York Times*, 25 February 2007.

<sup>184</sup> R. B. Olshansky, New Orleans Planning Update: The Unified New Orleans Plan, published by Planetizen: Urban Planning and Development Network, 11 December 2006.

<sup>185</sup> IRIN, “IRAQ-SYRIA: UNHCR highlights Palestinian refugees’ plight in desert camp,” 17 May 2007; IRIN, “IRAQ-SYRIA: Plight of Palestinian refugees in border camps worsens,” 27 June 2007; UNHCR “The Iraq

Analysis - UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), Sybella Wilkes, a spokesperson for UNHCR in Damascus, made the following statement about these remote camps: “the conditions are absolutely dire, [the camps] are places where people are dying. No man, woman or child should be living in that environment.” Hers is one of the few organizations still able to access this community.<sup>186</sup>

Communities displaced to remote and desolate locations are typically among the most difficult for agencies to reach, which exacerbates their vulnerability. In terms of consultation and participation, their input is also too often left out of humanitarian assistance initiatives.

### **4.1.3 Gender**

Recognizing that women often perform different types of labor and have different social responsibilities, their priorities and concerns are likely to be different from those of men. The importance of consulting with both women and men to understand these priorities is widely acknowledged, but challenges associated with doing so should be carefully considered.

Simply ensuring that information reaches women comes with many challenges. In Aceh, for example, where men are the primary consumers of mass media information, women rely significantly on their husbands and men for information, and men may not pass on all information if they don't consider it to be relevant.<sup>187</sup> Kreitzer notes that displaced women's ability to communicate (by both accessing and transmitting information) is a major factor in their “participation and empowerment.” Poor communication can also affect planning and implementation of women's programs. One woman in a refugee camp in Ghana commented, “I feel that the link between UNHCR and the implementing bodies that support women's programmes has not been favorable...There should always be this constant flow of communication between these organizations and the women on the camp, to discuss problems relating to them. Women are not fully informed...There is not communication between these groups.”<sup>188</sup>

Moreover, women's ability to actively participate – due to limited available time, family responsibilities, male-dominated camp management structures, cultural norms, and education and experience levels – is likely to be different from men's. For example, a study of refugee women's participation in planning camp programs found that women's inability to access basic food items and healthcare for their family as well as the absence of adequate childcare facilities affected their involvement in programming activities. One woman noted, “The women are the breadwinners of the family. And because they have so much to do during the daytime, it is

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Situation - Hundreds of lost souls still in no man's land,” 25 February 2004; Anthony Shadid, “Driven by War to a No Man's Land in Jordan: Lives of Palestinian Refugees From Iraq Reflect Six Decades of Dispossession,” *The Washington Post*, 2 April 2007, Page A01.

<sup>186</sup> IRIN, “IRAQ: Palestinian refugees despair after year marooned between Iraq and Syria,” 3 May 2007.

<sup>187</sup> I. Wall, “Where's My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005), 6.

<sup>188</sup> L. Kreitzer, “Liberian Refugee Women: A Qualitative Study of Their Participation in Planning Camp Programmes,” *International Social Work*, 45 (1): 45-58, 2002.

difficult for them [...] to have time to do other activities... Some of them, it's not only their family, their own children, but the extended family.”<sup>189</sup>

Recognizing the importance of women's participation, UNHCR's projects for Guatemalan refugees during the 1980s made concerted efforts to include women, inviting them to meetings and scheduling events at times they could attend. However, UNHCR found that simply ensuring that a certain percentage of participants were women did not result in women's concerns being shared and considered.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, they found that “the higher the stakes (the more resources involved or the more financially successful the project) the harder it was for men to cede space for women's participation and the harder it was to motivate women that they were capable and worthy of participating”.<sup>191</sup> For this reason, depending on the culture and the subject under discussion, the African Development Bank suggests that it may be more appropriate to consult with women separately and in smaller groups.<sup>192</sup>

Indeed, some NGOs report that women work together more effectively than men, “especially when organized into groups of different caste and socioeconomic status, which men find difficult to deal with”.<sup>193</sup> This points to the fact that men's participation should not be taken for granted; there may be significant challenges associated with incorporating men into participatory initiatives. In Sri Lanka, the ALNAP team found that men were not well integrated into participatory programs, and surmised that this was related to the fact that many programs occurred while men were at work and to their high levels of alcohol use.<sup>194</sup>

It is also important to ensure the active participation of men in consultative processes. At the November 2007 meetings, several participants argued that a focus on gender means equal attention to men's roles in society. In fact, women may be over-consulted, leading both to inadequate information for planning and to resentment by male IDPs about their lack of participation.

#### **4.1.4 Youth involvement**

Many agencies advocate consulting with children and youth as well as facilitating the participation of children in assistance and development programs. CRS/Zimbabwe's study of “Child Participation in Education Initiatives,” revealed the importance of children's work in their programs. The report notes, “Child participation in education initiatives is important because it is a child's right, because it enhances program quality and because it develops children's capacity for more advanced participation.” As with other segments of the community, children typically face specific vulnerabilities and often have needs that may go unrecognized by the adult

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> P. Worry *Lessons learned from UNHCR's involvement in the Guatemala refugee repatriation and reintegration programme (1987-1999)*, Sponsored by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for the Americas and the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, December 1999.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 15.

<sup>193</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 71.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 16, 85.

community. For example, CRS/Zimbabwe's implementing partner, Uzumba Orphan Care (UOC) facilitates child participation in the school assistance program by including child representatives in its Education Assistance Committees. These children play an important role in terms of needs assessment and identifying beneficiary children. "UOC says that children are in an ideal position to identify their vulnerable child counterparts because these peers are their playmates."<sup>195</sup>

Of course, child participation comes with specific risks as well, and it is imperative that the child's welfare is always the first priority. CRS/Zimbabwe states, "From a child protection perspective, it is also essential to understand that participation can have a significant impact on children's lives, and that their physical safety and emotional wellbeing must be of foremost concern." The organization notes the importance of keeping participating children and their parents well-informed of the process. In some instances, parental consent forms might be appropriate. Holding follow-up sessions with the child and parent at the end of their participation may also be beneficial.<sup>196</sup> The need for trained facilitators is particularly important in consulting with children.

#### **4.1.5 Culture, tradition, history and religion**

Cultural and religious traditions will influence the type of participatory activities in which a community is willing or able to engage. In Sri Lanka, for example, there exists a cultural tradition of voluntary action called "*Shramadana*," which builds on notions of self-reliance and community organization. *Shramadana* has been extremely effective in fostering IDP participation and has been used to mobilize community labor for humanitarian projects.<sup>197</sup>

Cultural and religious ideas about *types* of participation may also vary. For example, despite the cultural tradition of voluntary action in Sri Lanka "few civilians are accustomed to exercising choice, or involvement in decision-making. Even the notion of being consulted is foreign."<sup>198</sup> This stands in contrast with Colombia, where a history of participatory social organization has led IDPs to expect participation to the degree that they may refuse to get involved in activities if they have not been consulted.<sup>199</sup> Selecting individuals for participation also may be a foreign concept in societies where the focus is on group rather than individual action and needs.<sup>200</sup>

Participation may be easier to carry out in contexts with previously established participatory structures and institutions. Such structures may be in place where indigenous or ethnic groups have organized around community goals like preserving ancestral land. By contrast, they may be weakened a result of historical processes (e.g. colonialism), as in Angola.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> C. W. Fanelli and M. Mushunje, "How-to Guide: Child Participation in Education Initiatives," Catholic Relief Services (CRS)/Zimbabwe, 2007: 21.

<sup>196</sup> C. W. Fanelli and M. Mushunje, "How-to Guide: Child Participation in Education Initiatives," Catholic Relief Services (CRS)/Zimbabwe, 2007, 54.

<sup>197</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 69.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>199</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 52.

<sup>200</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 61.

<sup>201</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 63-64.

Religion may also affect a community's willingness or expectation of participation. The report of UNHCR-led consultations in Bangladesh noted, "Recognition of the importance of people's faith and the role of the Imams is an important strategy to engage with people and understand how it informs refugees understanding of present realities and complex issues associated with their refugee status. This approach builds upon strong cultural orientations towards communally-based responses and encourages a more sustainable dynamic of peer support and solidarity."<sup>202</sup>

#### **4.1.6 Education**

Participatory activities will need to be designed differently when dealing with illiterate or semi-literate populations. DFID has found that the more literate and articulate members of the community regularly dominate discussions with illiterate or semi-literate groups. In such situations, it is appropriate to use tools that rely more heavily on images than words.<sup>203</sup> Similarly, those with knowledge of European languages are more likely to be selected to speak on behalf of other IDPs, although they may not represent the average member of the group.

#### **4.1.7 Relationship of implementing agency or institution to community**

The relationship between the implementing agency and the community is a factor that will keenly affect participatory activities. For example, a 2005 study of UNHCR organization culture revealed that the subject of relationships between the displaced and UNHCR field staff was, in certain contexts, a contentious topic. As one employee disclosed, "Another taboo subject is our relationship with refugees. We're seen as distant. Someone referred to it as the submarine syndrome. We're in our fortresses managing operations, not making enough time to consult with beneficiaries. We are often seen as lacking in humility, with a lack of proper communication and we're not transparent with them."<sup>204</sup> The time an agency has spent working in a community and the establishment of trust are important factors in this relationship.<sup>205</sup> Agencies with close ties (personal, ethnic, historical, professional, etc.) to communities and which have developed trust are more easily able to engage in activities in crises situations; without this trust, open communication and therefore effective participatory action are more difficult.<sup>206</sup> However, local NGOs with close community ties may also be perceived as partial to a particular viewpoint or dependent upon a particular societal/religious group. Furthermore, if a government perceives agencies to be partial to a particular community, especially in conflict situations, it could inhibit their ability to work closely with that group. This has happened in Sri Lanka, for example:

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<sup>202</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007).

<sup>203</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), *Tools for Development – A Handbook for Those Engaged in Development Activity*, Version 15.1, March 2003: 7.6

<sup>204</sup> B. Wigley, "The State of UNHCR's Organization Culture," (Geneva: UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, May 2005), 35.

<sup>205</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 81.

<sup>206</sup> Community and Family Services International, et al, *Transition Intervention with Internally Displaced Persons: From Conflict toward Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines*, October 2003: 69; V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 93.

Agencies noted the government may perceive their work as biased in favour of one population (notably the Tamils, whom have been disproportionately affected by displacement). This apparent bias can result in the erosion of perceived neutrality in the eyes of the government: ‘to assist people is a political statement.’ There are entrenched perceptions held by Sinhalese nationalists, the government and armed forces of NGOs as ‘criminals’, spoilers, wrong doers.<sup>207</sup>

### ***Power struggles***

In some cases, power struggles between participating beneficiaries and an agency may emerge. Other times, implementing agencies may perceive a loss of control over a project and attempt to reinforce a strong supervisory role. In the case of the Lugufu refugee camp in Tanzania, the Congolese HITs (health information teams) were highly active in their participation, except in the realm of “initiating action,” the term used in this study to indicate the highest level of participation. According to the research team, “This implied that the HIT wanted more power to promote the health services at their own discretion, although they respected the supervisory roles of the TRCS staff. Nevertheless, many TRCS staff wished to maintain control over HIT activities by limiting the power of the HIT to make decisions and initiate action. Although, in general, the TRCS staff highly appreciated the contributions of and collaboration with the HIT, some did not have the confidence in the performance of HIT members.” As one TRCS staff member stated, “HIT works very efficiently most of the time but they still need our supervision and guidance. If we are not around to supervise their work, some HIT members, if not all, tend to neglect their duties or are unable to perform well.”<sup>208</sup>

### ***Suspicion***

In certain contexts, there may be significant mutual suspicion between the population and the agency – whether government or NGO. The TRCS was suspicious of the Congolese HIT mentioned above, expressing feelings of mistrust about the team’s transparency and information-sharing. One TRCS staff member stated, “Some HIT members do not always give us details of incidents among the refugee community, and it might happen that they hide something from us. So, I must say that I cannot trust some of them.”<sup>209</sup> In Sri Lanka, the ALNAP team found mutual hostility between the IDPs living in camps and the government. IDPs in government-run camps felt that they had not been sufficiently informed or consulted and that the government had made too many promises it did not intend to keep. If IDPs do not have confidence that their participation will result in change, they are unlikely to participate. Local government officials also displayed a hostile attitude towards the IDPs. In such situations, participatory action is difficult. A camp official told the ALNAP team that “We don’t allow camp committees to form because they would split the camps. The camp officer is the only person suited to this job.”<sup>210</sup>

### ***Disillusionment and resentment***

In the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, many IDPs reported that agencies did not fulfill their promises of assistance, which left communities disappointed and resentful.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> H. Lang and A. Knudsen, “Protracted conflict: Protection Challenges for Humanitarian Agencies,” (Austcare, 2008), 10.

<sup>208</sup> Y. Tanaka et al., “Refugee participation in health relief services during the post-emergency phase in Tanzania,” *Public Health* 118 (2004): 58.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>210</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 32.

<sup>211</sup> I. Wall, “Where’s My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information

In New Orleans, displaced communities have protested against what they perceive as the US government's intention to change the demographics of the city and prevent poorer African-Americans from returning.<sup>212</sup> These fraught relationships are likely to be less conducive to constructive participation and may result in communities turning to other sources of assistance and protection. In the New Orleans example, communities' suspicion and their frustration at the slow and inefficient government rebuilding efforts eventually led them to resist collaboration with the government in favor of help from NGOs and universities.<sup>213</sup>

***The inability to fulfill the needs of the displaced can also be disillusioning for aid staff engaged in consultations:***

“There is so much interest for UNHCR staff to reach out to refugees on a daily basis. We were excited to talk to refugees, but now we try to avoid meeting them because if our answer to every question is sorry, I can't, don't want to add to the frustration. It's very difficult...”

“The needs of refugees are so great and the resources we have are so reduced that we probably develop a thick skin, lethargy creeps in. So much so that when you see abuses being committed, often HCR colleagues are the last to know.”

“I wouldn't go to an emergency situation because I can't bear to see people die in front of us because of lack of resources. There is not much support for staff to deal with this. We used to be able to send people to university, now it's a worry about food and we don't have the answers they need.”

B. Wigley, “The State of UNHCR's Organization Culture,” (Geneva: UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, May 2005), 34-35.

#### **4.1.8 Resources**

##### ***Financial and time resources***

Evaluations of the costs of participatory programs in development demonstrate that later payoff in terms of greater effectiveness and sustainability means that the benefits of participation outweigh the costs.<sup>214</sup> The financial resources necessary to engage in consultation and participation will naturally vary according to the specific project, but while they may require a higher up front cost, consultation and other participatory processes need not require a higher overall level of financial resources or time.<sup>215</sup> However, sufficient funds, time, commitment and

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Working Group (UNDP, 2005), 5; M. Krupa, “Citizens say yes to Unified New Orleans Plan,” *The Times Picayune*, January 21, 2007.

<sup>212</sup> J. Cass and P. Whoriskey, “New Orleans to Raze Public Housing: Many Units Closed since Katrina to be Demolished, Despite Protests,” *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2006.

<sup>213</sup> K. Shevory, “One Path to Rebirth in New Orleans,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2007.

<sup>214</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 5; Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006), 6.

<sup>215</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006), 6; I. Wall, “Where's My House”? *Improving communication with beneficiaries: an analysis of information flow to tsunami affected populations in Aceh Province*, UNDP, based on research by the OCHA Public Information Working Group (UNDP, 2005), 3.

resources should be devoted to the process in order to avoid tokenistic participatory activities,<sup>216</sup> which may raise expectations without providing any benefits to the programs or population.

Among other things, the cost will depend on how far the participants must travel, whether citizens will be compensated for time missed at work and other duties, whether there is a fee for the site used, etc.<sup>217</sup> The African Development Bank found that the most costly element of participatory projects was ensuring that the projects were staffed by professionals skilled in participation.<sup>218</sup> While this may be the most expensive component of participatory activities, it may also be one of the most critical in ensuring that participation is effective.<sup>219</sup>

While it is important to consider the financial costs of consultation, the benefits of IDP participation go beyond simple cost-benefit calculations. Participation is a way to uphold the human right and respect the dignity of people who have been displaced.

### ***Space for participation***

The actual physical space available for consultation and other participatory activities should also be considered. ALNAP's team in Colombia found that "[c]ommunities that lack physical...space for participation, participate less."<sup>220</sup> Beyond that, the space should be deemed safe and private by IDPs willing to participate. The case study from the November 2007 meetings of West Darfur notes, "In participatory assessments in many places, *sheikhs* and *sheikhas* will choose to meet in the traditional meeting place, under a tree on a mat. While this may be appropriate for some themes of discussion such as assistance, discussions about protection should take place in enclosed places." Participants may not feel confident revealing their concerns if privacy cannot be ensured.

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<sup>216</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 4.

<sup>217</sup> N. Slokum, *Participatory Methods Toolkit: A Practitioner's Manual*, King Baudouin Foundation et al. (December 2003), 13.

<sup>218</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 5.

<sup>219</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 106.

<sup>220</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 89.



### ***The issue of space in participatory assessments***

“In some camps and settlements, it may be difficult to find completely confidential environments. Participatory assessments are often undertaken in community centres. Built from natural materials, the walls have gaps and curious onlookers often gather outside to observe the process. While onlookers will be asked to leave, participants may nonetheless not feel comfortable to speak in places in the camps where they cannot be guaranteed confidentiality. In a recent consultation in Nertiti, for example, the community centre was close to a main road and IDPs felt afraid to speak when they saw authorities passing nearby.”

UNHCR, “Participatory Assessments in West Darfur: Working towards Meaningful Partnerships between UNHCR and Communities,” presented at *Consulting IDPs: Moving Beyond Rhetoric*, Meeting on Consultation Mechanisms for Internally Displaced Persons hosted by Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. Geneva, Switzerland, February 2008. See Appendix for complete document.

#### **4.1.9 Mandate and expertise of implementing institution**

The organization’s field of expertise, mandate and degree of flexibility in programming will also influence the type of participation, allowing some forms and precluding others. For example, certain agencies regularly work with children, and have staff experienced in child consultation exercises. Other agencies may have more experience with victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and are better equipped to design relevant counseling programs.

#### **4.1.10 Funding structures and donor requirements**

Donor requirements will also affect participation and consultation. Requirements for upfront commitments, a preference for short-term emergency programs, or simply donors’ requests for funding proposals at short notice may all constrain the degree to which agencies are able to adapt their programs according to displaced communities’ priorities and requests.<sup>221</sup> Effective participation may require greater flexibility in approach and funding cycles than donors are accustomed to providing. Some donors have also played a role in ensuring participation of affected communities. For example, in Sri Lanka, DFID has been active in promoting participation in humanitarian action from a human rights perspective.<sup>222</sup> However, this is perhaps the exception rather than the rule. Participants at the Brookings-Bern meetings in November 2007 felt that consultations and the participation of beneficiaries in programming are not priorities for donors.

Despite an increasing awareness of the importance of participatory approaches, ODI suggests that often this does not translate into results on the ground. “Analysts of aid should continue to raise questions about the ways in which funding structures affect programming in potentially negative and disempowering ways. The persistence of practices despite changing rhetoric

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<sup>221</sup> J. Boyden, et al, *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP, 2002: 86.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid: 93.

suggests that underlying structures, as well as organisational cultures and informal institutions all need to be examined and transformed in order really to effect lasting change.”<sup>223</sup>

#### **4.1.11 Absence of local knowledge**

While knowledge of the terrain and local economy among the displaced can often be a resource, and indeed a strong motivation for consultation, that knowledge may be misplaced in new settings. In other words, IDPs may be displaced so far from home that their knowledge is no longer relevant to their location. Agencies should consider that in certain cases, particularly in the context of displacement, communities simply may not possess a familiarity with the local context that would make all types of participatory activities beneficial. In a new location, once familiar conditions like climate, vegetation, market conditions become unfamiliar; this may result in community members making poor choices. For example, in Sri Lanka, following a consultation process for IDPs:

An elderly man in Kalkulam explained that the...consultation process was effective, but that village inhabitants had made a poor decision: asking for goats that died due to adverse local weather conditions, and pumps that they did not know how to use. Similarly, in [an] income-generation program some sought productive implements for occupations in which they had no prior experience or skills, while others fell in with what was known and familiar and found that over-production of certain crops led to a collapse in local market prices.<sup>224</sup>

## **4.2 Risks Involved in Participation**

### **4.2.1 Social risks and stigmatization**

To be identified as an IDP in certain areas may lead to stigmatization or discrimination from the host population.<sup>225</sup> Displaced persons who participate in consultations may also be harassed by fellow community members who are displaced as well, but who are not participating in these processes. For example, a study by UNHCR in Bangladesh revealed that refugees worried about retribution for having participated in consultations. They described how “if they approached UNHCR the refugee block leaders (Mahjees) would follow them and intimidate them...Despite this hassling, the refugees reiterated on numerous occasions their need to speak out and tell their stories.”<sup>226</sup> In other cases, displaced persons may decide not to participate. This is certainly within their right; while “the participation of affected populations is central to effective and relevant humanitarian action, it is equally important not to lose sight of the right not to participate.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> J. Schafer, “Supporting Livelihoods in Situations of Chronic Conflict and Political Instability: Overview of Conceptual Issues,” Working Paper No. 183 (London: Overseas Development Institute, December 2002), 33.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>225</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 92.

<sup>226</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007), 4.

<sup>227</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 21.

Even when there is little risk of discrimination or stigmatization associated with being identified as an IDP, agencies should consider that those who take part in participatory activities may face risks from a variety of actors later. In Sri Lanka, for example:

Adopting a participatory approach and encouraging children to take responsibility for activities may add to the risks. As participants become more confident and develop skills of leadership they are likely to become both more attractive to those seeking to build a new generation of young commanders, and more threatening to those who fear exactly that. Furthermore, child participation in its fullest form suggests that the young be given the space to do exactly as they decide, with minimal or no involvement by adults. In a conflict situation this approach is clearly irresponsible.<sup>228</sup>

There is also the risk that poorer or lower-caste people may feel obligated not only to participate, but to participate according to a form dictated by their social position. While agencies may discourage this, they must understand that situations exist where “it could be more important for survival and wellbeing to sustain such vertical social ties than to build more egalitarian, horizontal networks.”<sup>229</sup>

Governments or non-state actors in control of territory may resist allowing participation if they fear loss of power.<sup>230</sup> Governments may resist consenting to IDP participation with INGOs if it is seen as a challenge to state sovereignty. If aid agencies are seen as ‘spreading rumors’ or speaking out negatively about the government’s role in the disaster or conflict. Finally, state officials may be wary of encouraging active participation if they anticipate it evolving into greater demands for land rights, job rights, and so on.

#### **4.2.2 ‘Over-participation’**

Without coordinated efforts among implementing institutions, participation may result in “consultation fatigue” or “over-participation” among communities.<sup>231</sup> Certain factors may contribute to the likelihood of this scenario. For example, there is often a greater risk of over-participation when a limited number of IDPs speak English or another European language.

The ALNAP team in Colombia described this phenomenon:

“where several humanitarian actors, active in the field at the same time, choose the same representatives within the community. In many cases this means work overload and a decrease in the effectiveness of the person involved. It is also likely to give rise to problems of neutrality, given the distinct concentration of power among a limited number

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<sup>228</sup> “Participation of Conflict-affected Children in Humanitarian Assistance Programming: learning from eastern Sri Lanka,” Unpublished draft report for CIDA, Colombo (2002), cited by J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 31.

<sup>229</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 34.

<sup>230</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 4.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

of people. This phenomenon can also take on wider dimensions, when the entire community is worn out from ‘too much participation’ because a large number of projects seek the community’s involvement. Communities really can have calendars in which every day corresponds to a community meeting to decide on something”.<sup>232</sup>

It was noted in Brookings-Bern’s November 2007 meetings that information-sharing among various agencies could eliminate over-participation in some instances, as consultations would not need to be repeated by multiple organizations. “When there are multiple agencies wishing to consult with IDPs, it is incumbent upon them to share information and coordinate their actions with other agencies. In fact this may lead to strengthened partnerships because, as one participant expressed, ‘we shouldn’t be competing with each other for access to IDPs.’”<sup>233</sup> Understanding community priorities and being sensitive to signs of fatigue may also help stave off over-participation.

### **4.2.3 Security risks**

One conclusion of ALNAP’s case studies (see in particular de Geoffroy 2003) is that while insecure environments may constrain participation, insecurity does not remove an organization’s responsibility to engage with communities. However, particularly when actors in control of territory oppose participation, participatory activities may carry risks for beneficiaries and national staff.<sup>234</sup>

Whether for reasons of culture or security, some communities may prefer to be represented by selected members rather than to organize collectively. Agencies should recognize the real risks that participation may pose for representatives or leaders.<sup>235</sup> While the public and open nature of participation by communities is often touted as a valuable feature of the process, it can result in the politicization of participation and the targeting of representatives by the government, military or non-state actors for their participation.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> V. De Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 70-71.

<sup>233</sup> Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, “Consulting IDPs: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” (meeting on Consultation Mechanisms for Internally Displaced Persons, Geneva, Switzerland, February 2008).

<sup>234</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 82; J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 53.

<sup>235</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 55

<sup>236</sup> B. Christens and P. W. Speer, “Tyranny/Transformation: Power and Paradox in Participatory Development,” *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2006): art. 22; Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement in Peace Processes, Peace Agreements and Peace-Building*, September 2007; V. de Geoffroy, *The Case of Colombia*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003).

#### **4.2.4 Inadvertent support for hierarchies and entrenchment of marginalization**

There are significant challenges in ensuring that the views of marginalized groups are heard and that participatory activities are not co-opted by more powerful members of the community.<sup>237</sup> Particularly during public events, the voices of dominant members of a community are likely to be amplified. Critics of participatory activities believe that rather than encouraging people to share their views, the public nature of many participatory activities suppresses the voices of less powerful members of a community.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, agencies encouraging participation in communities should not ignore the well-known dynamics of groups, in which certain voices are heard and others are suppressed.<sup>239</sup>

Recognizing this, manuals and toolkits of participatory exercises suggest including less public, alternative ways for people to express their opinions, including both verbal and non-verbal methods.<sup>240</sup> As noted above, it may also be useful to separate men and women and children and adults into different groups for participatory action.

Projects that limit their interactions and consultations only to leaders of a community assume that leaders do, in fact, represent the views of the community, are accountable to its members and share information. However, this is often not the case. While leaders should be respected and included, concentrating power and control over decision-making in the hands of leaders is likely to exclude marginalized groups. This is particularly the case in countries with weak participatory or democratic cultures.<sup>241</sup>

#### **4.2.5 Raised expectations**

Participation raises expectations among participants which, if unfulfilled, can create anger and disillusionment among displaced populations.<sup>242</sup> Evaluations of the tsunami relief effort are littered with examples of this, particularly from Aceh, where the broken promises of aid agencies have been the topic of local radio phone-in shows and even a popular song.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> African Development Bank, *Handbook on Stakeholder Consultation and Participation in ADB Operations* (2001), 4.

<sup>238</sup> B. Christens and P. W. Speer, "Tyranny/Transformation: Power and Paradox in Participatory Development," *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Art. 22, 2006.

<sup>239</sup> B. Cooke and U. Kothari (eds.), *Participation: The New Tyranny?* New York: Zed Books, 2001.

<sup>240</sup> K. Evans, et al., *Guide to Participatory Tools for Forest Communities*, Center for International Forestry Research (Jakarta: Indonesia, 2006), 6.

<sup>241</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 62, 66, 68; I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka*, (Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006), 13.

<sup>242</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Strengthening Participation for Development Results: A Staff Guide to Consultation and Participation* (April 2006), 4; F. Grünwald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 54.

<sup>243</sup> I. Wall, *The Right to Know: The Challenge of Public Information and Accountability in Aceh and Sri Lanka*, (Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, October 2006), 11.

One evaluation found that the majority of broken promises and raised expectations following the tsunami stemmed from communication problems, including the failure of agencies to be clear about their intentions and limitations. For example, in some cases agencies were carrying out needs assessments or gathering information, while communities believed that they had been promised assistance.<sup>244</sup> This was also the case in the relief effort following the Nahrin earthquake in Afghanistan.<sup>245</sup>

Some agencies argue that the possibility of raising unrealizable expectations is reason enough to avoid consultation and participation. In Guinea, the World Food Program (WFP) has argued that because the food basket for refugees ultimately depends on the international market and transportation considerations, to consult with refugees regarding their desired food choices would only serve to raise expectations that could not be fulfilled.<sup>246</sup> However, if carried out with clear communication about expectations, consultation may provide real benefits. For example, it could provide a needed venue for affected populations to discuss the details of their displacement and the challenges facing their community. It can also give agencies a better sense of the psycho-social state of the population. The following statement is from a UNHCR study on refugees in Bangladesh in which consultation mechanisms were employed:

The group consultations and individual interviews seemed to have been the first time that many of the refugees were able to tell their story of persecution and flight from Myanmar. Having “witnesses” to the events which precipitated their flight, being heard and acknowledged particularly in light of the years of threat of repatriation to ongoing persecution (as though the reason for their persecution had never been validated), and to understand the level of trauma present in so many individuals and the degree to which the past 15-16 years have exacerbated their trauma, was very important.<sup>247</sup>

#### **4.2.6 Manipulation by either party**

Critics of participation say that in too many cases, the participation of local people only serves to validate top-down planning and lend credibility to decisions that have already been made by agencies. Some even argue that “participation itself has become a commodity that [international] organizations use to advance their corporate image.”<sup>248</sup> Lending support to the critics, a staff member of an Oxfam-Great Britain project for IDPs in Sri Lanka told the ALNAP team that they: “do our project proposals before we enter a community. We then go in and ‘do participation’ – i.e. we get beneficiaries to agree to things that are in our mandate. If they want something outside the mandate, we can’t help them.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 58.

<sup>246</sup> B. G. Sokpoh, and K. Levy-Simancas, *The Case of Guinea* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2004), 102.

<sup>247</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007), 16.

<sup>248</sup> B. Christens and P. W. Speer, “Tyranny/Transformation: Power and Paradox in Participatory Development,” *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2006): art. 22.

<sup>249</sup> J. Boyden et al., *The Case of Sri Lanka*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002), 41.

Participation may also be subject to manipulation by local communities:

“Once local people understand the rules of the game, the participatory methods become tools of negotiation whereby local people gauge what benefits they can win from the outsider and communicate their needs in order to optimize returns. This results in distorted or contradictory data”.<sup>250</sup>

In other words, an IDP may come to see consultation as an opportunity to improve his or her position in society or to acquire tangible assets, for example, asking for a sewing machine which can be sold. The extent to which such actions constitute “manipulation” versus creative coping mechanisms should be debated. In general, a relationship based on trust and open communication may assist in avoiding such “schemes” on either side. However, it should be noted that trust between humanitarian agencies and the displaced is not the only factor affecting transparency in consultations. IDPs in situations of ongoing conflict or political uprisings may be motivated by a variety of factors related to their security and political standing. An Overseas Development Institute working paper notes the difficulty of conducting needs assessments for livelihood programs, stating “Security concerns influence people’s ability to provide information, while others attempt to produce rumours as part of military strategy. Conducting accurate analysis when the conflict dynamics are complex and multi-layered is not a simple task.”<sup>251</sup> In some cases, beneficiaries may respond based on safety concerns for the community.

In extreme cases, refugee participation may lead to an abuse of power, as in the case of the “*Mahjees*” leadership in Bangladeshi camps: “The refugee women and men described the system established some ten years ago to support the government agency, Refugee Relief Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the Ministry for Relief and Disaster Management, responsible for administering the camps. Individual refugees were designated as leaders, known as ‘*Mahjees*,’ by government officials to support the Camp in Charge (CiC) and the police in maintaining control and order, as well as to support camp organization. Men and women explained how over the years the *Mahjees* have become very powerful in the camps and that together with their volunteers they play an important role in supporting the CiC and the police in exercising their powers. [...] Women and men described a system of camp control run by the CiC, police and *Mahjees* which is sustained by and in turn sustains intrigue, false accusations, mistrust, bribery, corruption, fear and violence and the ultimate threat of ending up in prison. ‘A few days ago my mother was beaten by the men who are criminals and work with the *Mahjees*, - they are refugees. My mother was beaten then my brother wrote a letter to UNHCR about the beating and then he was arrested and sent to jail.’”<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> K. Evans, et al., *Guide to Participatory Tools for Forest Communities*, Center for International Forestry Research (Jakarta: Indonesia, 2006), 6.

<sup>251</sup> J. Schafer, “Supporting Livelihoods in Situations of Chronic Conflict and Political Instability: Overview of Conceptual Issues,” Working Paper No. 183 (London: Overseas Development Institute, December 2002), 33. [http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working\\_papers/wp183.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp183.pdf)

<sup>252</sup> UNHCR et al., *Refugee Consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007* (UNHCR, March 2007).

### **4.2.7 The time involved**

Though the findings of many case studies indicate that participation does not need to take a substantial amount of time to be effective, communities may feel that too much energy is devoted to participation that could be better spent implementing programs. Recipients of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan complained of “too much talking;” one man said, “A long time we are sitting in discussion and winter is coming, and time is lost. If you are coming for humanitarian aid, please bring your aid.”<sup>253</sup>

Agencies should also consider that participation may require time away from family or a job, or may bring up memories of traumatic experiences.<sup>254</sup>

## **4.3 Ethics of Consultation and Participation**

### **4.3.1 Obligations**

One ethical question that arises in discussions of participatory approaches is whether the agencies, governments, and others assisting IDPs have any moral obligation to consult with the affected population. Among agencies delivering emergency assistance in Angola, few were aware of (or comfortable with) the concepts of consultation and participation. They were “very rarely aware of the commitment ‘to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid’” as is laid out in the *1994 Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*, a document which also commits signatory agencies.<sup>255</sup> One NGO, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), asserts that “participation and consultation are related to the rights and responsibilities to make decisions about one’s own life,” and is therefore critical of agencies that have not facilitated these practices after intervening for extended periods.<sup>256</sup>

### **4.3.2 Responsibilities**

The responsibility of humanitarian agencies to do no harm directly impacts the discussion of consultations. Genuine consultation is done with the understanding that it will influence decision-making. But sometimes agencies themselves resist change. What if those consulted want to return, but agencies are worried about their security in that area?<sup>257</sup> What if the agency’s priority is to maintain a visible camp culture? What if participation isn’t part of the agency’s program? Furthermore, to what extent is consultation avoided because answers will contradict an organization’s standard practice? For example, there are basic reforms most displaced persons seek in current aid practices 1) for protracted emergencies – people want real housing (not tents),

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<sup>253</sup> F. Grünewald, *The Case of Afghanistan*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 71.

<sup>254</sup> UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2006), 14.

<sup>255</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 45-46.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 61

<sup>257</sup> P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 47.



2) access to their local food, and 3) earlier returns.<sup>258</sup> Why are these concerns not being addressed, despite the wide agreement among displaced persons and recognition by humanitarian

### ***Example of the ethical dilemmas facing agencies in Angola***

“Although the scale of the Angola emergency was vast, [respondents from humanitarian agencies] felt that it was in many respects a ‘routine emergency’ that went on for some time and it should have been possible to review the nature of the emergency more deeply. For them, many of the reasons for the low level of participation and consultation relate to agency practices and culture (such as the need for visibility and publicity, shallow participatory culture, staff turnover rates) and not to the context itself. By getting into a non-participatory mode, humanitarian agencies have difficulty in getting back to the participatory mode when the opportunities arise. Local staff, recruited in an emergency, get little experience of any other mode of operation, and so carry over the emergency mode to other scenarios. Resources for nonemergency action were limited because of donor perceptions that Angola was an acute crisis, and because agencies had done little to challenge this perception.”

P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 46.

agencies?

### **4.3.3 Accountability**

While agencies need, on the one hand, to be directly accountable to beneficiaries, they should also be aware of their impact on secondary stakeholders, which include local governments and civil society. In situations where multilateral funds and other resources are channeled through INGOs, there is a risk that accountability will “shift [...] away from local and national leaders, undermining local capacity and creating further dependence.”<sup>259</sup> In this sense, large agencies and NGOs should be conscious of crowding out sustainable long-term actors who might benefit from playing a lead role in the consultative process.

Similarly, A UN “Development Dossier” entitled *Debating NGO Accountability*, argues that this crowding out can limit the possibilities for “other means of social change.”<sup>260</sup> NGO programs can be limited, often focusing on specific projects. They may not have the expertise, authority, or political will to address underlying causes of poverty (or in this case, displacement). “This raises the very difficult question of whether by their very existence and success NGOs distract and detract from an agenda that would be necessary to ensure delivery of adequate services to all.”<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> I. Smillie, ed., *Patronage or Partnership, Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*, (Kumarian Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>260</sup> J. Bendell, “Debating NGO Accountability” Development Dossier, UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2006).

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 21.

In other words, accountability cannot be measured simply by examining the direct exchanges “between agents and objects.”<sup>262</sup>

Another question arises with regard to agency accountability to primary stakeholders with whom consultations have been conducted: to what extent should agencies hold themselves accountable for not acting on known vulnerabilities? For example, an agency that is genuinely accountable to its stakeholders may need to find alternatives to camps which pose major security risks to the affected population. High staff turnover, a common challenge in the humanitarian aid field, is also a factor in accountability. This can limit the effectiveness of programs, and disrupt the establishment of a consultative process and relationships of trust with IDP communities.

#### **4.3.4 Power**

Humanitarian assistance, especially of a participatory nature, can have a significant impact on the power dynamics in a community. An agency often has the ability to either support or undermine existing leadership through its decision over whom to consult. One pitfall of international agencies is the tendency to promote Western constructions of development and progress, which often involve particular ideas about governance, representation, and gender. However, it is not the responsibility (or right) of agencies to change local social norms, especially since this can cause marginalized groups to be targets of greater exclusion or even violence. Of course, there is also a conscious effort to avoid facilitating ethnic or sectarian power asymmetries, which is why consultations with marginalized groups are typically advocated. This remains a contentious issues and one that will rely greatly on local knowledge and experience working in the area.

In some cases, involving the local leadership can be extremely positive. ADRA promotes involving local organizations, saying that their exclusion from humanitarian assistance “can hasten their disintegration.” The counter-argument to ADRA’s policy is that reinforcing existing hierarchies can strengthen undemocratic leaders rather than helping the entire community.<sup>263</sup>

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

This desk study has shown that there are strong arguments for consulting with IDPs both on the basis of international legal standards and more pragmatic considerations of being better able to shape programs in accord with community needs and resources. It has also identified some of the practical challenges and ethical considerations in developing appropriate participatory mechanisms, stressing the need to respond to the particular community’s experiences and context. The study has revealed the existence of a substantial body of knowledge about consultation mechanisms which merits further dissemination within the international humanitarian and human rights community. Most importantly, the study has demonstrated that consultation can take many forms and that particular methodologies and techniques must be developed in light of the particular context of displacement.

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>263</sup> J. Wille in P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2003), 64.



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## 7. APPENDICES

### 7.1 Appendix A



## **Consulting people in relief settings: Aceh experience<sup>264</sup>** **World Vision Indonesia Tsunami Response** **Submitted by World Vision**

By Patricio Cuevas-Parra<sup>265</sup>

For an international humanitarian organization like World Vision, gender equality and participation are one of the key components to success in implementing relief programmes. Our approach is based on a strong emphasis on community participation where men and women have the same opportunities to contribute to development. World Vision is confident that this model is effective in overcoming poverty, promoting civil society engagement and strengthening communities.

In humanitarian crises, such as the 2004 South-Asia tsunami, the power relations that develop thereafter have the potential to exclude women or leave them at the fringes of the decision-making process. Women's participation in Aceh was impacted by the protracted civil war as well as the tsunami.

Immediately after the tsunami it was extremely rare to see women attending community meetings or training workshops. Initially, the majority of people, including community leaders and some NGO staff members, believed that any attempts to integrate women were unnecessary. They felt that it would be impossible to convince the communities to allow women to participate and, above all, international NGOs felt it was not their place to try and change the practices and beliefs within the local culture.

However, within several months, this scenario had significantly changed. Women actively participated in different stages of the humanitarian aid and recovery process. In many communities women, despite their cultural limitations, took extremely active roles. In many cases it was the women who were the first to express their opinions and to discuss openly the problems that they and their communities faced. This case study outlines some of the measures taken by World Vision to increase the participation of women and other vulnerable populations.

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<sup>264</sup> Extracted from the World Vision gender report "Still Standing Tall" by Patricio Cuevas-Parra and World Vision Humanitarian Protection report, March 2006.

<sup>265</sup> Former Advocacy and Protection Manager, World Vision Indonesia Tsunami Response. Currently Advocacy Manager with World Vision Lebanon.

## Consulting IDP women

To ensure participation and protection of vulnerable populations, World Vision Indonesia Tsunami Response set up the Humanitarian Protection Unit. This department was responsible for guaranteeing that humanitarian requirements were properly addressed within World Vision programs in the internal displacement situation and ensuring that humanitarian assistance addressed the crosscutting issues of gender and participation.

In order to ensure the timely and successful implementation of these activities, the Humanitarian Protection Department deployed a team leader and three specialists focusing on gender, land rights and internal displacement in Banda Aceh office and 13 officers in several different zones. To model a gender-based approach, the team was gender balanced with 9 women and 8 men.

The Humanitarian Protection team conducted several participatory assessments to highlight immediate needs such as shelter, water and sanitation. 58 Temporary Living Centers (TLC) along Banda Aceh built by World Vision were monitored by humanitarian protection officers. The results of this participatory monitoring process were delivered to the technical managers responsible for improvements in the field.

To monitor participation in the aid response, World Vision developed a checklist report form to evaluate programs related gender equality, safety and consultation.

World Vision designed and implemented a safety and security reporting system in the Temporary Living Centers prioritizing self-protection based on community empowerment to reduce vulnerability. This reporting system was developed in conjunction with community members, especially women. The humanitarian protection officers discussed the reporting system with community members throughout focus groups discussion and informal meetings. Some of the focus group discussion were conducted just with women and led by female staff to ensure confidentiality and to respect strict rules of the traditional Acehnese culture. The cultural codes of the province still impose upon women a series of mandatory cultural norms which they must follow and which often prevent their participation in civil life.

### **“We only ask to be listened to”**

Mardiah, Leupung, Aceh Province

“The people who built these shelters did not ask us any questions and we were not able to contribute with the many ideas we have, ideas that are very simple but also very helpful. For instance, we do not have a place to do the laundry. We use the same place that the men use as urinary. That is disgusting. Also, during the time of a women’s period we need to wash our clothes or underwear: in these conditions it is so uncomfortable because everyone can see it. We do not have enough toilets and always need to queue. When there are men in the line it can be embarrassing for us.”

"Achenese women are very strong and can face everything in the life, we are happy and we always have a smile. We are proud and self-sufficient. For us it is shameful to have to ask for help but now, sadly, we need help. We cannot overcome this alone. We only ask to be listened to. If they really listen to us they will be able to help us in the way we need to be helped.”

Once the consultation process was finalized, the final report form system was shared with community members to get their final feedback and approval. Extensive discussions with the local communities were very helpful for these communities to gain ownership and credibility of the process.

The second phase of this process was to leave reporting forms with the communities so that they were empowered to report any issues themselves. Six communities in Banda Aceh implemented this reporting system. The involved communities also elected two mediators (one male, one female) to facilitate full participation and an accurate implementation of these procedures.

Several focus group discussions<sup>266</sup> were also conducted to identify women's needs and to inform World Vision about how its programs could be redesigned in accord with the women's recommendations. Most of the focus group discussions centered on livelihood, shelter, security and participation. Women highlighted that livelihood was their major concern because the tsunami forced them to become the heads of their households, but they did not have the skills, training or money needed to develop a small business or gain employment. Women stated that many NGOs encouraged women's participation but did not provide any livelihood programs for them<sup>267</sup>. Women declared that participation without economic independence was insufficient. As a result of the focus groups discussions, economic initiatives conducted by World Vision were re-oriented to meet the women's needs. In response, World Vision's Female Friendly Spaces project was refocused to include innovative programs that respected the longstanding cultural norms and promoted traditional and non-traditional income-generation activities for women.

## **Challenges**

Strengthening women's participation was not just about numerical outcomes, but about overcoming major obstacles which hindered women from participating in the decision-making around design, implementation and monitoring programs. Their lack of empowerment was also linked to the issue of domestic violence, which communities were reluctant to acknowledge and consequently tackle.

In terms of safety, the local perception was that safety could only be guaranteed by the use of force or threats to use force. Other types of non-violent methods such as active civil participation and empowerment were not regarded as viable options. Changing these perceptions was one of the main challenges.

One of the most critical barriers to women's participation was the resistance of the community leaders, especially religious leaders, who felt threatened by western approaches that could change their traditional decision-making roles and values. At the staff level, the main challenge was to balance the pressure to respond to the urgent needs in the tsunami's aftermath on one

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<sup>266</sup> FGD in Leupung, Aceh Province. December 2005. FGD in Banda Aceh/Aceh Besar. 2005. FGD about Single Parenting in Lhoong, Aceh Province, January 2006. FGD in Lamjabat, Aceh Province, February 2006. FGD about Gender and Recovery in Banda Aceh. March 2006. FGD with participants of Female Friendly Spaces in Lamno, March 2006.

<sup>267</sup> Focus group discussion with participants of Female Friendly Spaces, Lamno, March 2006.

hand and the need to allow communities to participate on the other. They considered it very difficult to provide spaces for communities to express their opinion in an extremely large and complex humanitarian intervention like the tsunami program.

### **Recommendations for changes in practice to ensure women's participation in relief settings**

- Ensure that community participation activities accommodate the specific needs of women, such as holding the activities in a safe place and scheduling the activities for times that fit with the women's domestic arrangements.
- Ensure safe access for women to humanitarian aid centers, prioritizing self-protection based on participation and community empowerment to reduce vulnerability.
- Strengthen women's leadership capacity in their own communities and provide opportunities for them to exercise this capacity.
- Respect cultural norms and use an element of creativity, such as strengthening the role of women in existing traditional spaces for women.
- Ensure participation, both in terms of numbers, as well as, in real access to participation in the decision-making processing related to the relief setting, from aid delivery to development.
- Identify vulnerable women and develop specific strategies to address their issues and to ensure their participation.
- Have a cultural sensitivity component to humanitarian aid and delivery to understand the gender dynamics of a particular society.

## 7.2 Appendix B

### **Participatory Assessments in West Darfur: Working Towards Meaningful Partnerships between UNHCR and Communities** Submitted by UNHCR

In West Darfur, where UNHCR is the lead agency on protection and camp coordination, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are engaged to better understand their needs and design effective strategies to promote fulfillment of their rights.<sup>268</sup> Many UNHCR policies and guidelines recognise the inherent need for consultations with IDPs, enabling them make decisions for themselves and promote cost-effective and sustainable initiatives to assist communities to meet their basic needs.<sup>269</sup> UNHCR's *Participatory Assessments Handbook*<sup>270</sup> (UNHCR PA Tool) is the main instrument guiding the consultations that take place across West Darfur twice yearly. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *Protection for Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action* (IASC IDP protection tool) provides a similarly useful model for obtaining information from IDPs about their protection situation and proposed solutions.<sup>271</sup> This tool is a useful means to help depart from the thinking that participatory assessments are merely a part of periodic programme planning, and to help to streamline the process into routine and meaningful community interaction throughout the year by all staff, including NGO partners, and in all areas of work. This paper examines the successes and challenges of conducting these assessments in the West Darfur context, and makes recommendations for improving the process to ensure that the voices of IDPs are heard throughout the programme and protection planning. It incorporates the views of facilitators from UNHCR and NGO operational partners, as well as displaced persons in West Darfur.<sup>272</sup>

#### Participation as an Ongoing Process: Challenges in Accessing Communities

The views of IDPs should be obtained throughout all stages of planning, implementing and monitoring protection and programme activities.<sup>273</sup> Regular contact with IDPs enhances depth of understanding of protection concerns of different groups in the community and facilitates more

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<sup>268</sup> "IDPs and refugees will be engaged at every stage of the programming cycle. The assessment of needs and the planning and implementation of activities will include the participation of the diverse groups within communities to ensure that their concerns are addressed. Community participation is a cornerstone of UNHCR's protection strategy in West Darfur." UNHCR, *2007 West Darfur Protection Strategy*, 2007, p.2.

<sup>269</sup> See *Agenda for Protection*, UNHCR, October 2003, Goal 3, Objective 4: Communities empowered to meet their own protection needs and Goal 5, Objective 7: Achievement of self-reliance.

<sup>270</sup> UNHCR, *The Tool for Participatory Assessments with Refugees*, 14 June 2005. Note: the term 'refugee' is used to refer to all people of concern in a given situation, including internally displaced persons.

<sup>271</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee Protection Cluster Working Group and Early Recovery Cluster Working Group, *Protection for Conflict-Induced IDPs: Assessment for Action*, September 2007.

<sup>272</sup> In preparation of the paper, views about the successes and failings of the UNHCR participatory assessment process were sought throughout October 2007 from: UNHCR West Darfur staff from the 5 field offices (Zalengi, Mukjar, Habillah, Mornei and El Geneina); from NGO partners who assisted with the process (half-day sessions with 36 staff from IRC, DRC and Mercy Corps); and from over 67 displaced persons who had participated in the process in Zalengi and Nertiti.

<sup>273</sup> *UNHCR Manual*, UNHCR, October 2002, Chapter 4, Section 1.4 on Operations Management System.

focused discussions in the consultation process. If participatory assessments are an ongoing process, the stereotype of the foreigner arriving in an air-conditioned Landcruiser and asking IDPs questions once or twice a year, scribbling some notes on a pad and then disappearing in a cloud of dust can be avoided. Information about the protection situation of IDPs and the profile of the community should be gathered in advance of the formal process and updated regularly. All opportunities to interact with IDPs must form an integral part of the participatory assessments to avoid superficial exercises conducted under the pressure of deadlines to report. Through constant contact with communities, it becomes clear that there is usually never one answer to a problem, and that there may be varied views among the community. To achieve this in-depth understanding of the community, UNHCR needs to invest in building rapport with various groups in the community over time. This is feasible in places where UNHCR interacts regularly with a smaller community with open access, such as Mukjar. In these cases, it is possible to receive information from a variety of sources, and actively seek the views of perceived opposition. It also provides us a platform to share our limitations in an environment of trust. However, the reality in other sections of West Darfur is often different. Many IDPs are in areas that are inaccessible, and UNHCR must find appropriate ways to conduct a meaningful participation process.

The UNHCR PA Tool recommends 2 levels of research before discussions with IDPs. Firstly, *mapping diversity* ensures consultations take place with representative samples of the community, involving a breakdown of the community by factors including age, sex, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, level of education, and any other social distinction.<sup>274</sup> There is no formal, consistent system of registration of IDPs in West Darfur.<sup>275</sup> The data from camp managers or, in rural areas, food distribution statistics provide general information on the breakdown of age, gender and often vulnerable groups. The data, however, typically provides only general information. Moreover, the criteria for defining vulnerable groups vary between agencies<sup>276</sup> and may not include data on groups facing particular protection risks, such as survivors of sexual violence, who also would need to be included in consultations.

Where information is lacking on the profile of the IDP populations, it is supplemented at the second stage of preparations through the review of existing documentation, including “previous assessments and analyses, as well as any documents and reports concerning the local social, economic, political, legal, physical, and security environment”.<sup>277</sup> In IDP camps in larger towns, where there are generally a number of international agencies and government departments, there are regular meetings with communities and often an abundance of documentation about protection concerns. In the absence of formal registration procedures, there is generally sufficient information about the profile of the communities to prepare well for consultation processes. The IASC IDP protection tool recommends assessments take place “in situations in which security conditions and time allow for a comprehensive assessment of the situation of IDPs and affected communities. Whenever possible, it should be used in parallel or as a follow

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<sup>274</sup> UNHCR, *Participatory Assessment Tool*, p. 12-13.

<sup>275</sup> In some places, it is difficult to obtain up-to-date and reliable estimates of IDP numbers. Many NGO camp coordinators have designed their own way of “registering” or profiling camp populations, but the methodology varies from one agency to another.

<sup>276</sup> UNHCR has worked with different agencies to use common criteria, in order to have a more complete groups of the IDP communities in West Darfur who cannot meet their basic needs and the community cannot support.

<sup>277</sup> UNHCR, *Participatory Assessment Tool*, p. 11.

up to a profiling exercise and where profiling data is available, it should build on it.”<sup>278</sup> The challenge in West Darfur is that large numbers of IDPs live in settlements and camps outside the main towns.<sup>279</sup>

It is difficult to access many camps and settlements in West Darfur on a regular basis owing to factors such as poor security or environmental conditions.<sup>280</sup> In these mostly rural areas, there are often no agencies with a regular presence and protection activities for IDPs are limited. UNHCR field office staff conduct missions to these areas when conditions permit, and seek the assistance of partners or community leaders who are working directly with the IDPs in these communities to obtain information protection issues and gaps. Where serious issues are raised and cannot be examined by the teams conducting participatory assessments, more in-depth research may be arranged.<sup>281</sup> This information could then be used in the participatory assessment process to select appropriate groups of children and engage them in finding practical solutions to the protection concerns they face.

### Selecting Participants in Insecure Environments

The groups that will be consulted and the themes discussed depend on the profile of the population and their circumstances. Selecting groups that are representative and appropriate themes or including the host community could present difficulties and even protection risks for the population concerned.

#### *(i) Selecting Representative Groups of IDPs*

In Darfur, representatives of the communities are selected in coordination with the *sheikhs* and *sheikhas* (traditional leaders), as well as youth leaders. Male, female and adolescent leaders are consulted first, in order to respect the cultural norms. Traditional leaders may, in some cases, be a source of protection concerns for some groups in the community.<sup>282</sup> They may exclude certain groups or people. It is important to pass through the traditional leaders but other methods to target representative samples of the community must be found, through other committees in the camps or other sources (such as child centers).

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<sup>278</sup> IASC, *Protection of Conflict-Affected IDPs*, p.4.

<sup>279</sup> For useful information on displaced persons living in camps and rural areas, please see: <http://webgis-darfur.intersos.org>.

<sup>280</sup> On 1 April 2007, only 68% of affected populations (and less than 60% in West Darfur) were accessible for UN humanitarian aid - owing to the degree of general insecurity, continued harassment of organizations and workers, and random targeted attacks on humanitarians and their assets. See: Office of UN Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan UN Resident and Humanitarian Co-ordinator, *Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 27*, 1 July 2007, p.4.

<sup>281</sup> For example, in remote localities such as Um Dukhun and Wadi Saleh in the southern part of West Darfur, there are currently no agencies with a regular presence working on child protection. UNHCR monitoring teams made *ad hoc* reports of serious child protection issues, such as forced recruitment and sexual violence. To obtain more information about the nature and prevalence of these violations, UNHCR engaged an implementing partner to undertake an in-depth analysis. See for example: Save the Children Spain Mission in West Darfur (Cecelia Delaney), *Children Focused Situation Analysis: Um Dukhun*, May 2007.

<sup>282</sup> For example, in South Camp in Nertiti, the sheikhs' refusal to allow registration means that a number of vulnerable persons have been without essential non-food items for 12 months.



## *(ii) Inclusion of the Host Community*

As well as interviewing IDPs, it is helpful to include other actors, such as the host communities. UNHCR teams in West Darfur have found that including host communities in the consultations can elicit good information about the extent to which protection threats, such as sexual violence and looting, may affect the community as a whole in urban environments. Inclusion of semi-nomadic or nomadic communities in their *damras* adjoining settlements of displaced farmers can be useful with regard to certain issues of common concern to both communities. For example, information about assistance needs can be useful to ensure that project planning in sectors such as water and education can address the needs of the community as a whole and therefore help to break down tensions between the IDPs and the host communities.<sup>283</sup> This can take place only in the circumstances where the agency conducting the participatory assessment has a good relationship with the nomad and farming communities and understands the inter-relationships between them. Undertaken in controlled circumstances, so as not to create unrealistic expectations about services that can be provided to host or adjoining communities, such initiatives can help promote understanding and further reduce the protection risks associated with the targeting of services to IDPs in places where the local communities have similar needs.

## Conduct of Interviews

### *(i) Methods of Enquiry*

Even where representative groups are found, they may be afraid to speak freely in front of others. Some camps in West Darfur are more political than others. In Zalengi, the home-town of a main Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) rebel leader who has not joined the Darfur Peace talks, IDPs may face protection risks if they do not support the opposition line. Focus discussions may also be used by political groups to send a common message to the international community. Those who do not present the common position may be punished. In other focus group discussions, there are persons who report to government agencies, and it will not be possible for members of a group to speak openly about subjects such as sexual violence.

Where IDPs may face protection risks for speaking in groups, reliable information is obtained through different methods of enquiry. The UNHCR PA Tool recommends a variety of methods. Focus group discussions in a group with common characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.) help obtain information on non-political issues and enable IDPs to propose solutions to enhance existing coping strategies. The smaller the focus group, the more likely the IDPs are to voice their concerns. Groups of over 10 persons become difficult to manage. It can be difficult and cause conflicts, especially in small places, to select only a few representatives to speak on behalf of whole groups.<sup>284</sup> Semi-structured discussions conducted with smaller groups

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<sup>283</sup> For example, UNHCR's implementing partner, the Danish Refugee Council, have conducted participatory assessments in October 2007 in villages in Northern Wadi Saleh that included nomadic populations living alongside IDP communities. Their programmes in water, education and agriculture target the communities as a whole and help to promote tolerance among the communities and thus reduce protection risk for persons of concern, such as conflicts over natural resources.

<sup>284</sup> For example, in the small IDP settlement in Habila an NGO partner to asked elders to gather a small group of 10 men and 10 women to talk with UNHCR. However, more than 200 men and women gathered to speak with UNHCR. UNHCR solved the situation by initially holding a short meeting with all of the people, where they were

in an informal and conversational way are particularly useful when handling contentious political topics or sensitive protection issues such as sexual violence. Observations and spot checks in areas where the IDPs access services or identify protection risks help to verify or contextualize information received.<sup>285</sup> Discussions with individuals in the camps and settlements and visits to homes of extremely vulnerable individuals are found to be the best way to acquire the most reliable information. People are in familiar environments and less inhibited than in group situations.

## (ii) *Selection of Appropriate Themes and Creating the Right Environment*

Themes are selected for focus group and individual consultations through analysis of the most immediate protection concerns for particular groups in the community. In introducing the subject, however, participants may identify their own themes for discussion. Having a formal structure for participatory assessments makes them more threatening for some IDPs, especially when discussing sensitive issues. Facilitators must therefore remain attentive to the needs of the participants and adapt accordingly.<sup>286</sup>

Also, having formal interviews may make attract unwanted attention to the process. Facilitators must remain aware of what happens after the process. There have been instances in Foro Baranga of police targeting individuals who met with UNHCR, and insisting that the IDPs provide information about what had taken place in the sessions.

Selecting appropriate themes can be more difficult in situations where IDPs have been displaced for several years. In many situations, the problems of various groups remain the same. Also it is difficult to find new and innovative solutions to improve the situation. For example, girls and women complain about lack of security on firewood collection outside the camps. Several facilitators found themselves proposing solutions of alternative energy sources or firewood patrols to try to get the groups to think about solutions that had been proposed elsewhere. These ideas may not represent the views of communities who, in some places, become increasingly dependant on external support and less active in asserting their own proposals.

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informed about some assistance programs that would soon be offered to them by our the NGO partner. Then, the community leaders were again asked to select two small groups among those who had gathered. This was only possible after all the people had the opportunity to be greeted and provided with some useful information.

<sup>285</sup> UNHCR, *Participatory Assessment Tool*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>286</sup> For example, in recent consultations in a camp in Zalengi, the selected theme for consultations with girls of ages 6 to 12 was education because it there had been a trend observed of girls leaving school to seek casual employment. The discussion commenced with a group of 12 girls, and several older girls expressed that their most serious concern was about sexual exploitation in casual labor situations. In the situation where girls wanted to select for themselves a more sensitive theme, facilitators had to ensure that the methodology was adapted to ensure a more appropriate environment. It was made clear that noone would be forced to participate and people could leave and join a separate discussion group. One of the facilitators left and the assessment was carried out as an informal discussion with 8 girls in a more secure, enclosed room in the community centre. It was found that it was easier for children to talk directly to the facilitator and without translators, as the flow of conversation was not interrupted. The remaining 4 girls stayed in an open area in the centre and discussed education with the facilitator.

### *(iii) Ensuring a Secure Environment for Discussions*

Additional protection concerns can be created if participatory assessments, particularly discussing protection problems, are not conducted in secure environments. Facilitators must remain aware of any potential threats in carrying out the participatory assessments and terminate discussions immediately if there is any doubt about the security of the environment. In participatory assessments in many places, *sheikhs* and *sheikhas* will choose to meet in the traditional meeting place, under a tree on a mat. While this may be appropriate for some themes of discussion such as assistance, discussions about protection should take place in enclosed places.

In some camps and settlements, it may be difficult to find completely confidential environments. Participatory assessments are often undertaken in community centres. Built from natural materials, the walls have gaps and curious onlookers often gather outside to observe the process. While onlookers will be asked to leave, participants may nonetheless not feel comfortable to speak in places in the camps where they cannot be guaranteed confidentiality. In a recent consultation in Nertiti, for example, the community centre was close to a main road and IDPs felt afraid to speak when they saw authorities passing nearby. If IDPs were to speak openly about protection issues, the facilitators stated it could have caused further security problems for them in the camp, such as detention, beating or being accused of inciting violence. Instead of adhering strictly to pre-determined topics of conversation, it may be useful to choose a non-structured type of interview, where it is left to the community members themselves to raise the issues they feel are of greatest importance to them. In this way, if the group feels safe to raise issues of security, they will do so even without the facilitators asking them about it. This is particularly useful when traveling to communities for the first time, without possessing in-depth information about the protection issues in that community.

### *(iv) Selecting the Facilitators and Interpreters*

Participatory assessments are carried out by UNHCR and, most often, are assisted by staff from implementing partners or other agencies working with the IDPs in the camps or settlements. It is important that all staff conducting the consultations receive training on the process, including the ethics for conducting the assessments, the purpose, expected outcomes and follow-up. This includes interpreters. Assumptions should not be made about the level of knowledge of the facilitators, and all of those involved in the process should receive the same briefing.

Selecting the right facilitators can present a challenge. Assumptions should be tested. In Darfur, the presumption, for example, that it is useful to include in discussions with women a local community liaison staff from the camps is not always correct. In particular, if IDPs want to provide feedback about women's centres in the camp, they may not be able to speak freely in front of persons working in those centres. Sometimes IDPs feel more protected to speak to foreigners directly because they believe they will be more in a position to assist. In other places, there may be a fear of speaking with foreigners present. It varies from place to place, depending on the circumstances. The initial briefings and close team work throughout the process enables team leaders to remain aware of the dynamics between facilitators and participants. In all cases, irrespective of constraints of time, the staff conducting the participatory assessments should be

adequately introduced to IDPs. Sometimes IDPs will be suspicious of persons they do not know, who are not always present in the camps. There have been complaints about persons conducting assessments not wearing ID cards.

#### *(iv) Adequate Preparation of Communities*

One of the challenges with participatory assessments, particularly where time is limited because of access issues, is ensuring adequate preparation of the communities to explain the process. The communities need adequate notice and sound briefings about the nature of the process. This should be explained by the teams conducting the assessments. Otherwise, there is a danger of creating false expectations. In a feedback session with IDPs about the participatory assessment process, it was revealed that children called to participatory processes in a Zalengi camp (Khamisa Dageg) were informed by a sheikh that they would be given clothes if they attended. While not meant with any bad intentions, the statement produced additional communication barriers that could have been avoided if the process had been properly explained and the introductions monitored in advance.

In the right circumstances, consultations designed and facilitated by IDPs (with the agency staff playing a less active role) can be more effective. Working with groups in community centres, for example, the IDPs will be able to determine and lead a methodology for consultations that will be less artificial than the interview-like process of the focus-group discussions. For example, IDPs suggested that women at the regular morning coffee session in the women's centre will feel most comfortable talking about their problems and proposed solutions.

#### *(v) Special Measures for Children*

Children are able to provide the best ideas about how to improve their displacement situation, and may very often have valuable information about the situation faced by their parents and other family members. However, participatory assessments with children can be daunting for even the most experienced and capable staff. And, if conducted badly, the consultations can be traumatizing for the children as well.

In practice, participatory assessments with children are often more successful with a person who speaks their language because most IDP children are not used to speaking through a translator, which may interrupt the flow of conversation. The reality is that, in many interviews, an interpreter will be required because many children speak only their tribal dialect and no Arabic. While it may be reasonable to think that children would feel more comfortable speaking with someone from within their community, this is not always the case. The communication skills of the interviewer and interpreter are generally more important when working with children than any other factor.

A facilitator should have a comfortable, friendly and non-threatening method of communication. The issue of communication with children is dealt with in UNHCR's *PA Tool*.<sup>287</sup> The UNHCR checklist (attached) states that a translator should be a "person who would not intimidate children." What does this mean in practice in West Darfur? Is it best to avoid someone from

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<sup>287</sup> UNHCR, *Participatory Assessment Tool*, p.17 and annex 2.

within their community, e.g. an “animator” from a children’s centre who may be associated with members of their community perpetrating violence in the school? Is it best to avoid an Arabic-speaking foreigner, who may be feared by children as an outsider? The real challenge is how to apply the guidelines in practice.

While it provides some guidance on dealing with children, the UNHCR *PA Tool* still leaves a gap in practical application.<sup>288</sup> It is essential to have guidelines in place to bridge this gap and ensure good methodology,<sup>289</sup> drawing on the plethora of practical guidelines from consultations with children in different contexts.<sup>290</sup> Such guidelines need to take into account cultural issues in the Darfur context. Specialised training and practical exercises, including on the ethics of working with children, should be carried out for all facilitators. This should include information on effectively managing psychological issues as they may arise. As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, what seems reasonable in theory may prove difficult in practice. In all situations, manuals should be developed to assist facilitators to apply the PA Tool in the particular cultural and political context.

### Importance of Adequate Follow-Up

After the participatory assessment process UNHCR, as the lead agency for protection and for camp coordination and camp management, collects the main issues and proposed solutions of the IDPs from each age group and shares with actors in relevant sectors. The information is also used for designing UNHCR’s protection and programmes. Feedback sessions to explain the follow-up and outcomes to IDPs are critical in their understanding of the process and foster good relations with the agencies who are working to put their ideas into practice.

UNHCR conducts participatory assessments twice a year in Darfur for programme purposes. Feasible solutions proposed by IDPs should be implemented as soon after the participatory assessments as possible. This demonstrates to the IDPs that they can make a difference, and the value of the participatory process is immediately felt. For example, in Bindisi, women suggested that they would like to have regular meetings with the African Union on protection-related issues and to work together on finding solutions. UNHCR facilitated the formation of the Women’s Network within a fortnight.

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<sup>288</sup> For the PA Tool recommends to:

- Play with children to establish rapport - It would be helpful to suggest some techniques (e.g. children’s games) for interviewers who do not have experience working with children or have difficulty establishing rapport with children to encourage them to speak;
- Have some basic knowledge of how to work with children in the specific cultural context before engaging with them - It would be essential to have information in advance of sessions about the specific cultural issues pertaining to children, including prevalence of violence against children and how it is dealt with by community;
- Identifying in advance what challenges might occur and discussing how best to deal with them – It is necessary to adequately research issues in advance, such as trauma and mental health issues common among IDP children and how these issues effect communication.

<sup>289</sup> UNHCR, *Participatory Assessment Tool*, p.24.

<sup>290</sup> For particularly good examples of techniques for working with children, please see: UNHCR, *Findings in the Participatory Assessment with Children in Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi*, November 2005; SUDIA and Save the Children, *Displaced and Refugee Children and Service Providers: How Children See their Situation*, Cairo 2003; and Save the Children: *Eye-to-Eye: A day-by-day guide to running creative photography workshops with children aged 10-15*, 2002.

Lack of follow-up or failure to explain the follow-up will lead to ill-feeling among IDPs. One facilitator was confronted by IDPs in at the beginning of a session with women who demanded to know why they had to give the same information over and over when nothing would be done to solve their problems. The information that is provided by IDPs is discussed at a participatory planning workshop, and there may be a number of limitations, such as competing priorities or shortfall of funds, which mean that some initiatives may not be able to be undertaken immediately. Information about these limitations must be conveyed to the beneficiaries.

### Conclusion

It is possible to work with the constraints in Darfur to conduct meaningful participatory assessments. Where IDPs, including vulnerable groups who do not normally have a voice, have had an opportunity to express their opinions and see them eventuate into reality, the international humanitarian community is merely a vehicle for them to resolve their own concerns with reference to their already-existing coping mechanisms. One of the most crucial aspects of the participatory assessment process is ensuring adequate follow-up and continuing the dialogue with IDPs. Persons of concern must see that their suggestions are transformed into something substantive, at the very least to show that their suggestions and concerns are acknowledged by more than nodding of heads during the discussion groups. Otherwise participatory assessments can be more harmful than helpful. In order for UNHCR to have a real partnership with IDPs, and not just one on paper, the efforts in communication must be both ways.

## Annex 1

### Participatory Assessment Checklist Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming

- Inform and explain to IDPs and government officials about AGDM
  - Ensure they have copies of the PA TOOL 2005
  
- Sensitize community leaders of the importance and reasons for the AGDM
  
- Organize focus groups
  - Groups of 6-8 people. Try to involve refugees throughout settlements who may not usually be consulted.
    - Organized into different age/gender/ethnic backgrounds (if applicable)
      - Female: children 10-13, adolescents 14-17, adults 18-40, 40 plus
      - Male: children 10-13, adolescents 14-17, adults 18-40, 40 plus
  - Ensure appropriate translator is available (e.g. person who would not intimidate children.)
  
- Remember to include transect walks.
  - This includes walking around an area, observing and discussing living conditions with local people.
    - Observe areas such as the environment, housing and sanitary conditions, male-female interaction, children's activities, street commerce and types of organizations.
    - Frequently ask questions of the local community to gain their perspective.
  
- Establish sub-teams from Multifunctional Teams assigned to your office
  - Each team should have representatives for programming, protection, field, community services and gender balance if possible.
  
- Prepare the schedule for meeting focus groups
  - Select discussion themes
    - Education, livelihood, security, protection, community participation, health
  
- Meet and discuss with focus groups
  - Protection risks, causes of risks
  - Assistance needs, community resources
  - Solutions, priorities
  
- Teams meet in the evenings to review and analyze data collected.
  - Decide on protection strategies and programs
  - Fill out systemization form and report form
  
- Prepare Multifunctional Teams for the Participatory Planning workshop
  - Include representatives from:
    - Government counterparts, operational partners, refugee/IDP representatives.

## Annex 2: Communicating with children<sup>291</sup>

It is common to assume that most children are too young to be aware of what is going on around them or too young to be adversely affected by dangerous or distressing experiences; however, children, like adults, must have channels to express themselves.<sup>292</sup> Communicating with girls and boys of all ages and of diverse backgrounds, for a variety of purposes, can be challenging and requires skills significantly different from those required for communicating with adults.

Ethical issues concerning informed consent and confidentiality for girls and boys arise and will vary according to cultural context, age, sex of the child, background, etc. The potential ethical challenges for each group/individual should be considered and discussed before, during, and after undertaking the participatory assessment.

When talking with children, consider:

- Keeping a friendly and informal atmosphere so children feel at ease. One suggestion is for the team to say that they want to learn from what the children have to say. Team members may also want to share with the children some personal information about themselves (e.g. I have children at home, I have a dog/cat, I come from.../I speak... at home), so that they are able to see them as “whole people”;
- Having some basic knowledge of how to work with children in the specific cultural context before engaging with them;
- Identifying in advance what challenges might occur and discussing how best to deal with them. Expert support, such as medical staff, should always be on hand should complex issues arise. Teams should also agree, as a group, upon basic guidelines when working with the children. This will make it easier to solve problems if a discrepancy in the team’s methodology occurs, as well as preventing disagreements;
- Being composed of both women and men when working with girls and boys, as some children prefer to speak with members of the same sex.

Teams should consider the following **ethics** when communicating with children:

- Coping with distress: seek expert advice if signs of stress emerge; follow-up support should be available, if required;
- Expectations: teams must be clear what kind of information they hope to obtain from the children;
- Informed consent: teams must obtain permission from parents before speaking with children. In addition, their participation is voluntary; children have the right to keep silent or withdraw from the process at any time;
- Confidentiality: children should be reminded during discussions of the confidentiality they owe to each other, and that the team members owe to them;
- Acceptability: children’s views and experiences should be accepted and never challenged;

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<sup>291</sup> Adapted from ARC, October 2002.

<sup>292</sup> Child participation is strongly emphasized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and several of its articles are relevant in the context of communicating with children: Article 12, for example, emphasizes the right of the child, who is capable of forming his or her own views, to express those views in all matters affecting him or her.



- Power dynamics and the role of the adult team member: children may be anxious to give the “right answer” and to please the adult by saying what they think the adults want to hear. To counteract this tendency, teams should explain their role clearly, invite questions, give clear permission to children to say what they want or to decline to answer if they choose, and value their contributions.

## 7.3 Appendix C

### Consulting IDPs: Moving Beyond Rhetoric Submitted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

*In northern Pakistan, the October 2005 earthquake killed more than 73,000 persons, and left up to 3 million homeless. In its direct aftermath, a young woman when asked to state the most urgent requirements requested winter clothing for children, food, and kitchen utensils; moments later, a middle-aged man stated his priorities as being corrugated iron sheets, tarpaulins, and clothing – he discarded kitchen utensils as strictly secondary.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ICRC attempts to prevent violations of internationally accepted rules set to limit the effects of armed conflicts, and avert and alleviate their humanitarian consequences; within this legal framework<sup>293</sup> the ICRC adopts a broad, "all victims" approach, which involves considering the victims of armed conflict comprehensively, without discrimination. Individual target groups – such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), women, children, and the elderly – are only singled out for attention based on their needs. This approach in itself implies a dispassionate observation of the needs arising from armed conflict, and of how the victims themselves view their circumstances.

### 1.1. The ICRC integrated approach

Due to its protection and assistance mandate, the ICRC has developed a multidisciplinary response capacity, which is adjusted according to the changing working environment.

ICRC protection operations aim at preventing, stopping, and/or avoiding the recurrence of violations of the laws designed to protect civilians from the effects of armed conflict and violence. This approach involves discussions with the alleged perpetrators of violations, and is built upon confidential consultation with the victims and/or witnesses.

For the ICRC, humanitarian assistance<sup>294</sup> aims at preserving or restoring decent standards of living, as determined by the social and cultural environment. It benefits individuals or communities affected by armed conflict and other situations of armed violence, covering essential needs that are not met independently. This coverage may take the form of direct or material support, but equally involves different forms of dialogue, for example with the authorities that hold the primary responsibility for delivering essential services.

Economic security is defined as the status of an individual, household, or community that is able to cover its unavoidable expenditures in a sustainable manner, according to its biological and

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<sup>293</sup> Embodied in the four Geneva Conventions and their three Additional Protocols.

<sup>294</sup> The Assistance Division of the ICRC includes three Units: Water and Habitat, Health, and Economic Security (including relief). It reports to the Director of Operations.

cultural standards. The ICRC addresses economic *insecurity* through a range of core activities, including nutrition, general food and essential item distributions, veterinary and agricultural support, and micro-economic initiatives.

## **2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Implicit in the above definitions is the prior description of a given group's social and cultural standards, and this can only be accomplished through dialogue and consultation. The ambition to achieve full economic security - that is, in a sustainable manner - likewise implies an understanding of the local environment, and the constraints and opportunities that it presents.

Like many humanitarian agencies, the ICRC uses a number of standard tools in order to gather the information required to shape its understanding of the working environment and the circumstances of the victims of armed conflict<sup>295</sup>. In terms of dialogue, these include participatory appraisals, group discussions, semi-structured interviews and conversations with key informants; in the case of IDPs, interlocutors must include the host community wherever it exists. In fact, a basic understanding of the host community is a prerequisite for inquiries into the circumstances of the IDPs it accommodates.

### **2.1. "Consultation" or "dialogue"?**

Consultation is understood in the following remarks as a form of Socratic dialogue. One fundamental parameter of Socratic dialogue, the duty – as opposed to the right – to express views, should in principle underlie the entire, two-way, process<sup>296</sup>. Likewise, the duty to hear and take into account the interlocutors' concerns permeates the process.

In practical terms, then, the victims of armed conflict – including IDPs – are not only consulted, but should first be thoroughly informed of the ICRC's mandate<sup>297</sup>, its scope and limitations, and the rationale for its presence and attention. These issues contribute to the discussion throughout the process, shaping the interlocutors' understanding of one another.

### **2.2. Dialogue to maximize impact**

The above type of dialogue permits the ICRC to adjust its response to the consequences of armed conflict or other situations of tension; it also enhances the relevance of this response in the light of local standards and customs.

### **2.3. Dialogue to limit harm**

Clearly, humanitarian action must strive to limit the harm that it may itself generate. However, given the diversity and complexity of the situations requiring humanitarian action, many context-specific parameters escape the attention of even the most seasoned field worker. The anticipation of negative side-effects can only be as precise as the relevant information available

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<sup>295</sup> The ICRC Guidance Document "*Addressing the Needs of Women Affected by Armed Conflict*" and the ICRC "*Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*", among others, summarize and describe this approach.

<sup>296</sup> This concept of duty raises the issue of willingness, within the boundaries of discretion and personal safety: in view of its protection and assistance mandate, the ICRC bases consultation on the voluntary testimony of its interlocutors. By no means therefore can this concept of duty entail a constrained exposure of the interlocutor.

<sup>297</sup> Which usually extends to the host National Red Cross/Red Crescent Society's, as the ICRC's main operational partner in the field.

at the time of operational planning. Consultation must therefore reach beyond the scope of the proposed action in order to engulf characteristic features that may influence it at any given stage, even after its completion.

One universal example is associated with land tenure: in some locations, IDPs hosted within resident communities are granted access to land for cultivation or grazing purposes. In others, access to land is so pivotal to communal tension that IDPs are deliberately excluded from it. In still others, IDPs are permitted to use the land, but different forms of taxation can be overwhelming. In all these cases, a minimum understanding of the prevailing regime and customs is necessary in order to avoid eventual complications for the recipients of assistance (or their hosts), even in the form of relief items.

In relation to the oft-quoted principle of "do no harm," the possible negative side-effects of humanitarian assistance should be considered carefully. They cannot however always be averted: the humanitarian response to significant population movements always entails some attraction for so-called "opportunistic displacement."<sup>298</sup> Large-scale humanitarian action, such as camp accommodation, tends to encourage influx sometimes simply to ensure safety for more vulnerable family members, and this can be detrimental to the social fabric.

#### **2.4. The specificities of dialogue with IDPs**

The concept of consulting IDPs – as opposed to consulting the general population – is challenging insofar as IDPs are, by definition, removed from their home environment and temporarily placed in a foreign medium.<sup>299</sup> Consultation involving IDPs – or refugees for that matter – then needs to take into account both the circumstances of the IDPs, and those of their surroundings (e.g. the resident host community, emerging armed groups or authorities<sup>300</sup>).

As mentioned earlier, dialogue with IDPs (or other outsiders such as refugees) to the exclusion of the host community can produce negative effects as it may eventually impede natural integration and, in some cases, lead to tension. The dialogue process is therefore crucial, but equally important is the choice of interlocutors based on their representation.

#### **2.5. The limits of dialogue**

Humanitarian action in any situation of armed conflict or other type of violence is required because the formal system has failed to provide adequate protection and assistance for its victims. Humanitarian action cannot meet the needs arising from such situations fully; each agency has its limitations, and these shape the dialogue it can engage in with the victims.

##### *Limit 1: operational scope*

The dialogue process with any type of target group, as mentioned earlier, must involve some degree of introduction as to the reasons for the inquiry and the characteristics of the agency conducting it. Beyond simple courtesy, this introduction – and the elements of discussion it raises throughout the dialogue process – serves to set the framework for the agency's attention, and to

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<sup>298</sup> If only because the standard of the services delivered in camps is frequently superior to that in the areas of IDP origin.

<sup>299</sup> All the more so when families are separated, and when family members have been killed or are missing.

<sup>300</sup> Which may themselves attempt to manipulate the IDP issue in line with their own priorities.

manage expectations. As such, it is designed to avoid lengthy discussions on concerns that lie outside the agency's mandate or operational scope: for example, the introduction would also serve to avert requests for large-scale infrastructural works made to a small agency with limited means.

The difficulty then lies in conveying the concerns and priorities expressed by consulted IDPs or other groups for that matter. Inter-agency coordination could certainly be improved in this regard, in a real effort to ensure optimal needs coverage.

#### Limit 2: underlying agenda

The limits of consultation often overlap with the boundaries set by individual agendas, be they political, military, ideological, or financial. Limiting individual agendas include those of the IDPs themselves, and they can be difficult to identify with accuracy.

#### Limit 3: external constraints

Proximity to the victims is a major operating principle of the ICRC – in fact, in the absence of first-hand information, protection action cannot be undertaken. In many settings today, field access to displaced populations is unreliable or even altogether impossible. In Iraq, for example, it is unlikely that the ICRC will, in the foreseeable future, be able to monitor its deliveries of material assistance to al-Anbar Governorate through the Iraqi Red Crescent Society directly on the ground. In such cases, consultation and dialogue are deliberately restricted to the minimum requirements for efficient action<sup>301</sup>.

The common denominator in all the above limitations is set by the criterion of utilization: the systematic collection of information that is not relevant to the endeavour at hand is futile, and may even be harmful<sup>302</sup> (especially with respect to protection concerns). The challenge then lies in determining the fine threshold between comprehensive dialogue and pragmatic data collection.

## **2.6. Cultural sensitivity**

In the genuine enterprise to improve dialogue through broad participation, universal approaches can easily ignore, or even undermine, local social and cultural standards. The current drive to consult women systematically, especially if conducted by expatriate male staff who are ignorant of local customs and habits, is a common example of the culturally sensitive imposition of Western concerns.<sup>303</sup> Equally common is the sincere concern with the fate of small farmers, to the detriment of – for instance – a hierarchical progression from large landowners down to their farmhands. Another illustration is provided by the choice of latrines in IDP concentrations, which also requires a minimal understanding of local habits.

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<sup>301</sup> As action itself unfolds and evolves, dialogue with the victims should of course develop accordingly (in this case via the national partner, the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and national NGOs engaged in the programme).

<sup>302</sup> Such data collection is likely to raise false expectations.

<sup>303</sup> "Addressing the Needs of Women", *op.cit.*, acknowledges this concern throughout, with emphasis in its very introduction (pp. 10 and 12).

## **2.7. What matters most: the IDPs' view**

In view of the above, the obvious question thus arises as to what the IDPs (and other victims) consider their role and contribution should be in the consultation process: how would they wish to be consulted, and on what type of issues? This question needs to be answered in order to determine what degree of consultation is necessary at what stage of any given emergency. It is also crucial in order to formulate recommendations as to how the information thus gathered should be used: to return to the opening anecdote, women and men in obvious shock following the Pakistan earthquake of October 2005 held quite different views on what commodities were most urgent.

## **3. ICRC EXPERIENCE**

### **3.1. Description**

The ICRC aims to be at the forefront of the international community's response to the humanitarian needs of persons affected by conflict and other situations of violence - including IDPs, whatever the cause of their displacement. It wants to follow a global approach towards the civilian population, prevent forced displacement whenever possible, and address the humanitarian needs of both the displaced population and local and host communities

The issue of IDPs reacquired importance on the agenda of the international community, humanitarian organizations, and donors following criticism of the international response to the conflict in Darfur. As was the case in 2000, the debate centred on ways to improve protection and assistance for IDPs.

In 2006, the need for the ICRC to revisit its position on the issue of IDPs and the response to their plight became apparent as a result of the debate on the reform of the UN humanitarian system.<sup>304</sup> At the 2005 ICRC Donors Support Group meeting, held in Ottawa, participants had encouraged the ICRC to clarify and reassert its position and objectives on this issue.

In recent years, the ICRC has operated on the basis of an institutional position defined in 2000. This position was found to be still appropriate, both in operational terms as well as in relation to the ongoing debate in the international community. Still it was slightly updated in 2006.

The ICRC has designed protection and assistance strategies aimed at preventing displacement and addressing the needs of IDPs and returnees in order to take into account the great diversity of the circumstances in which displacement occurs.

- *Recent crises of a sudden and large-scale nature*, such as the conflict in Darfur (Sudan), Chad, Central African Republic, Lebanon, Iraq, or the natural disasters in Indonesia, and Pakistan, which call for an urgent response and strengthened coordination between the players involved in order to provide support for people already displaced and prevent others from suffering the same fate;

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<sup>304</sup> Notably the Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) commissioned by Jan Egeland.

- *Longstanding conflicts*, such as those affecting certain regions of Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the northern Caucasus, Afghanistan, Uganda, and Sri Lanka, which have left an already fragile population in utter destitution, or following which displaced persons may settle permanently where they are instead of returning home;
- *“Frozen” conflicts and post-conflict situations*, such as those prevailing in Angola, Eritrea, Georgia, Liberia, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast, calling for the sustained presence of humanitarian agencies long after the peak of violence is past and for protection and assistance for both displaced persons and returnees;
- *Situations of high insecurity* that limit or prevent the involvement of humanitarian organizations, such as those prevailing in Iraq, Somalia or the northern Caucasus, where aid activities have to be largely "remote-controlled" from abroad and implemented by local staff.

In 2006 the ICRC thus supported, in one way or another and at least once, 4 million internally displaced persons and returnees in 32 countries.

### **3.2. Success and shortfalls**

One difficulty is related to the fact that, unlike refugees, the status of IDPs<sup>305</sup> is not legally defined. One major question then arises in association with operational planning, interagency coordination, and the drafting and implementation of best practices: when does displacement end?

As mentioned earlier, the ICRC aims to be at the forefront of the international community's response to the humanitarian needs of persons affected by conflict and other situations of violence - including IDPs. However, this ambition is shared by no less than fifteen international agencies that have identified internal displacement as an operational priority. The initiative of the Brookings-Bern Project to call an interactive meeting with a view to addressing the issue of best practices on the matter is therefore welcome, and comes at a crucial time when the international humanitarian community is faced with the immense task of extending meaningful assistance to the displaced civilians of Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Somalia, to name only a few of the most complicated operational contexts.

## **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Significantly, IDPs are attracting growing humanitarian attention. Indeed, their plight is at the heart of the current reform of the UN humanitarian system, a process that the ICRC welcomes. However, the current IDP bias could suggest that those who have not been displaced are

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<sup>305</sup> The United Nations propose the following standard definition of an IDP: “...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internally recognized State border.” (UN/UNOCHA Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2004).

comparatively safe and, clearly, not only IDPs are affected by armed conflict.

Furthermore, positive discrimination towards IDPs directs attention to one segment of the conflict-affected population, and can result in an exclusive focus on the consequences of displacement to the detriment of its causes; this can undermine the overall effort to *prevent* displacement and the many other consequences of IHL violations.

In addition to reminding the authorities of their obligations, the ICRC in partnership with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies therefore provides protection and assistance not only for IDPs but also for host communities and other residents, in accordance with its assessment of needs. Supporting hosts strengthens their capacity to accommodate and support IDPs, and prevents the depletion of their resources<sup>306</sup>.

The ICRC's experience as outlined above raises doubts regarding universal standards on the matter of consulting IDPs; the ICRC consequently has great expectations of the forthcoming workshop, notably in the realm of flexibility and the reflection of local reality and customs.

As indicated earlier, the ICRC would welcome guidance on the subject of the IDPs' own view as to how they would wish to be consulted; this may even provide an opportunity to determine the threshold between open dialogue and efficient data collection.

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<sup>306</sup> Which could ultimately cause their own displacement in search of basic commodities.



## 7.4 Appendix D



### **The IDP Voices Project** Submitted by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council

#### **IDP Voices**

When did you last listen to a displaced person and grasp the impact of displacement on them? This question leads us right to the heart of the IDP Voices project - the need to **listen**. To listen to what displaced people themselves want to tell us, to learn what is important to them.

The IDP Voices project was developed by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) with Panos London's Oral Testimony Programme in 2006. Its purpose is to record and communicate the perspectives and experiences of internally displaced people (IDPs) through the collection and dissemination of life stories. The aim is not to gather institutional, political, or socio-economic information, but to capture personal accounts and insights into the reality of displacement on the lives of individuals. The project serves to complement the more quantitative and factual data that IDMC promotes through its monitoring and advocacy activities.

The first country selected for the IDP Voices project was Colombia, and the second project is currently underway in Georgia. In 2008 and 2009 new projects will be rolled out in Africa and Asia.

By using oral testimony methodology, IDMC strives to show the complexity of individual experience, to reveal hidden experiences and connections, and to deepen understanding of and sensitivity towards the views and values of those directly affected by displacement.

Effective presentation of the life stories through engaging formats is an essential part of the project, making the information more accessible and increasing the potential impact of advocacy work. The IDP Voices website [www.idpvoices.org](http://www.idpvoices.org) is a crucial resource for promoting the life stories. For the Colombia project a book was also developed and in Georgia several of the life stories has been published in local newspaper *24 Hours*, which is distributed freely to displaced people. Future projects will explore other formats, such as radio and theatre.

## **The project methodology**

The countries selected for the IDP Voices project are priority countries for IDMC's advocacy work. The project is then developed in close cooperation with the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) field offices, NRC's counterpart organisations and internally displaced people themselves.

The life stories are collected by interviewers selected from communities affected by conflict-induced displacement as well as those working for non-governmental organisations representing internally displaced people, including psychologists, trainers, lawyers and social workers. This approach adds to IDMC's capacity building efforts, to empower people by providing them with the opportunity to develop oral testimony skills, to collect life stories and be significantly involved in the project. All of the interviewers have a good knowledge of displacement either through their profession or through first-hand experience, which deepens their understanding of the effects of displacement. Some of the "professionals", for instance, have valuable experience relating to sensitive interviewing and working with victims of trauma.

The people interviewed are referred to as "narrators" in oral testimony work, rather than interviewees. This is a deliberate use of the word to reinforce the fact that they are narrating their own story, rather than just responding to the interviewer's questions.

### **The Colombia project, step by step**

**Selection of interviewers:** In Colombia nine people from four different regions – four displaced people, a social worker, three psychologists and a lawyer – were trained to interview the displaced narrators.

**Training:** The training included different ways to conduct life story interviews and reinforced skills around the importance of listening to the displaced without judgment. Participants learned how to handle difficult security situations, and became familiar with the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* – the international standards drawn up to prevent forced displacement and to protect and assist internally displaced people – as a framework for rights. They also worked on thematic issues and the psychosocial aspects of interviewing traumatized people. Participatory and creative methods were used throughout.

**Who to interview:** Interviewers were asked to identify narrators from their communities whom they thought could tell their stories, but also to interview people who normally did not have a voice in the community. In some cases, they also had to interview community leaders first for reasons of respect and etiquette.

**Protection:** To protect the narrators and others involved, the project maintained a very low profile during the collection of stories and no photographs were taken of the interviewees (photographs of other Colombians are used in outputs for illustration purposes). A support group including various members of the international and diplomatic community was set up as a further protection mechanism. Real names were not used in any of the project documentation, and other names and places which might identify the narrator were also changed or removed.

Participatory review: In a review and end-of-collection meeting, participants discussed what they had learned, the key themes emerging from the collection and the psychosocial issues raised by the process. They also shared ideas for the dissemination of the testimonies including offering their suggestions and criteria for the selection of the testimonies for publication. The project was of dual benefit: as well as raising the voices of the displaced, it empowered the project participants through developing their skills and involving them in project design, implementation and review.

Selecting stories: In all, 54 displaced Colombians were interviewed and their life stories recorded in open-ended interviews. All of the stories were then transcribed word for word. A reading committee was set up to select stories based on the interviewers' suggestions and criteria. The chosen 19 were then carefully checked and edited, and these edited accounts were translated into English. The remaining 35 transcripts offer a wealth of information that remains to be processed and analyzed, and we hope this can be done in the next phase of the project.

Publication: The stories were published and the narrators' experiences communicated in various formats. The stories were compiled in the Spanish book *Para que se sepa – hablan las personas desplazadas en Colombia*; an English version of the book (*Let it be known - internally displaced Colombians speak out*) was also produced. The Colombia life stories are available in Spanish and English on [www.idpvoices.org](http://www.idpvoices.org) in text and audio. The website also contains key extracts from the life stories organised according to 13 themes representing the main impacts of forced displacement. The extracts illustrate and explain the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

Dissemination, promotion and advocacy: The book, the website and a multimedia presentation were used to support high-profile events and debates in Bogotá, and Madrid on Colombia's internal displacement crisis, each of which served to highlight the situation to governments, international organisations and the media. In both events, internally displaced people made presentations and gave speeches. The "life story" methodology was also presented as a side event at UNHCR's Executive Committee in Geneva on 5 October 2007. There are a series of further dissemination and advocacy activities planned in the coming year to enhance the reach and impact of the Colombia life stories. Several presentations have also been made in Colombia for local authorities, NGOs and internally displaced persons. But more still needs to be done.

### **Why life stories?**

The IDP Voices project is not about internal displacement as a series of issues or themes; it is about the impact of internal displacement on people. To be receptive to this we must engage not only our brains, but also our hearts. It is impossible to understand fully the phenomenon of displacement without listening to the stories of those who have actually experienced it.

From personal accounts we may also glean the reality behind generalised notions of displacement. The focus is on capturing the feelings, tones of voice and the spirit behind the

individual experience. The stories stand alone; there is limited analysis – their power lies in their offering of images, a voice, sensations, feelings, hopes and dreams.

It is important to see the phenomenon of displacement in a continuing time perspective. By looking at the entire cycle of someone's life, a deeper understanding may arise of the changing and continuing effects of the displacement. The narrator becomes not only a victim of displacement, reduced to the status of an internally displaced person, but also citizen with other identities and experiences.

### **Why is this consultation process different?**

IDP Voices is about empowerment and raising awareness. It takes a holistic approach to displacement and the lives of those affected by it, rather than attempting to compartmentalise people's lives into discrete development "sectors" that fit planning frameworks. Displaced people are invited to describe their lives in the way they want to and very much set the agenda for the interview. It is expected that the life stories can contribute to specific advocacy activities by IDMC and its partners, and that the project itself also aims to increase the commitment to listening to and learning from the displaced themselves. After all, without "actively" listening to analysis and inputs from the people affected, protection and assistance services will be unlikely to meet the desired outcomes.

The one-to-one nature of oral testimony enables the interviewer to engage with some of the more marginalised and "quieter" members of a community, those individuals who wouldn't feel comfortable or confident to participate in, or speak out in a group consultation process. A space has been given to the individual voice. The key is to create a process and a space in which people can dare to speak up without any risk of them feeling pressured, stigmatised or influenced by others.

### **What are the challenges?**

For a person displaced as a result of conflict or human rights violations to tell their life story may carry a risk and can even be life-threatening. "*When my narrator chose her pseudonym, she felt comfortable and talked more fluently...*" commented a life story interviewer in Colombia. The serious security risk has been, and still is, a challenge for several of the interviewers and narrators. As the stories are published, continued strong support from the international community is needed to protect those involved.

Interviewing vulnerable individuals who are not in a position to control the use of their stories presents numerous ethical issues. Representing stories in ways that do the narrators justice needs continuing attention. It is important to have the displaced narrators involved as far as possible throughout the whole process. The project strives to find appropriate ways to give feedback on the development of the project and to return testimonies to the narrators. In Colombia it was considered too dangerous to return the individual testimonies, so the narrators received the final book, with names and places changed to protect their identity.

Any consultation with vulnerable populations can create expectations amongst the people interviewed, and it is of utmost importance to be very transparent and clear about any activity's purpose and outcomes. Within the Colombia and Georgia projects it was clearly stated that

advocacy was the goal and that those involved wanted the voices to be heard in both national and international forums. It is important to work with a partner organisation connected to the communities involved and based in the project country. They will be able to continue to support the narrators and their communities after the life story collection and the insights and learning from the life stories can also inform their ongoing work with those communities.

The commitment to capacity building, together with the overall participatory and considered approach means that the training and collection process requires time and investment. Narrators need time if you want them to tell you things which are important to them. The interviewers strive to meet with their narrators several times so that their stories can evolve slowly but surely. Some narrators have specifically requested further interview sessions in their eagerness to tell their story.

Time is also necessary for the painstaking work on selecting, editing and checking the meaning of the collection of extensive personal accounts. The audience will not hear the original voice of the narrator, and so it is an editorial challenge to translate and preserve the colour and texture of the original voice while ensuring you have an account which is meaningful, especially to readers not familiar with the context. Turning this rich and personal material into accessible and high quality outputs (the book and the website) is highly labour-intensive.

And so each IDP Voices project takes between one and two years. The time and resources needed are significant. It is difficult to engage and convince donors, and even our own organisations, of the resources and time needed to carry out these projects effectively.

### **What are the benefits?**

Despite these significant challenges, the project has found that there is both a need and an enormous desire to share stories. *“We own our story and it’s a terrible thing that no one knows about it”* comments one participant.

Trust is created, hearts are opened and people start to talk. One narrator used the phrase *“to suffer in silence”* many times throughout the interview. IDP Voices has created a space in which the narrators can express themselves freely without being judged. *“Having the opportunity to tell your life story can be therapeutic; it can be a restoring and empowering experience”* says one life story interviewer.

It may be the first time that the narrator has had a chance to tell his or her story. Some have acknowledged that it is difficult to recount painful experiences. However, most narrators also say that they felt relieved or even happy and privileged, to be able to tell their life story to an attentive and sensitive listener. Several narrators have stated that they didn’t talk much to other people about these deep experiences due to lack of trust and fear, so this opportunity to be heard is considered of great value.

By giving displaced people an opportunity to speak out in their own words on issues which concern them, rather than having their needs and priorities interpreted by outsiders, IDMC hopes to contribute to the empowerment of participants and internally displaced people as a group. The project gives us a unique chance to grasp the impact of the conflict at first hand, and appreciate

the extraordinary courage of people determined to let the world know what has happened to them.

Life stories complement the conventional baseline surveys and needs assessments routinely carried out by humanitarian and development agencies. They should serve to enable planners and policymakers to appreciate the complex and varied impacts of internal displacement and identify new ways to protect those affected. In this project we have, for example, learned about the individuals' different coping mechanisms and survival strategies in the absence of protection by national and international actors.

The power of personal stories and the individual voices can engage a broad audience – and so the material has been shared widely beyond our normal “key stakeholders”, thus increasing awareness about internal displacement and the impact it has.

## **Conclusion**

In Colombia, as elsewhere, displaced people are not consulted about their opinions, and there is often no way for them to participate in decisions regarding their own future. This is in clear violation of international legal standards. Ensuring participation of displaced people in decision-making is a key benchmark for national responsibility for internal displacement. In Colombia, the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* are part of the Constitution, but there is a significant gap between policy and practice.

Through these stories we learned that many internally displaced people in Colombia have to face displacement repeatedly. They may move from the countryside to a nearby village, then to a town and possibly end up in the shanty towns of Bogota. These multiple displacements cause repeated trauma and loss.

However, these life stories are not about passive victims – they are about people with inner strength, with a strong will to survive and a desire to regain control of their lives. What came up clearly in the life stories in Colombia is that while the protection needs of the population are huge, they are handling the situation on their own with minimal national or international support.

Finally, it is our hope that this project will contribute to a better understanding of the effects of internal displacement for civilians. It is aimed at the hearts and minds of decision-makers, politicians, planners and policymakers in order that they may fully appreciate the complex and varied impact of internal displacement and identify new ways to protect those affected.

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