**Findings of the SCHR Peer Review on Participation**

**Northern Uganda and Kurdistan Region of Iraq**

**18-21September 2017**

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# INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from the peer review of participation practices undertaken by the SCHR Working Group as part of SCHR organisations’ collaboration on an agenda to meet the following goal:

**In 5 years-time, participation of people affected by crisis in humanitarian response decisions that concern them has become a concrete reality. SCHR will make this happen by demonstrating and communicating best practice, strategies and approaches.**

This peer review comes in complement to the desk overview of participation practices, based on SCHR organisations’ Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) assessments, specific relevant studies and / or Real Time Evaluations and Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) reports, published in July 2017. **Its aim is to achieve an understanding of SCHR organisations’ current approaches and of actual enablers and disenablers of effective participation.** It also brings in questions related to needs analyses, which underpin the Programme Cycle, and cash-based programming, generally considered as a potential “game changer” in terms of participation, to better understand how these can reinforce effective participation.

It is anticipated that the findings from both the desk overview and the peer review will Inform each of SCHR’s organisations’ work towards effective participation of affected people in humanitarian decisions and actions which affect them. It will also provide the basis from which to move forward on SCHR’s collective participation agenda, as its members understand critical questions and issues better.

# APPROACH AND SCOPE

**Methodology**

The peer review was carried out in two contexts[[1]](#footnote-1), northern Uganda and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, to enable some degree of comparative analysis. Nevertheless, the fact that each is characterised by camp-like settlements hosting either refugees (northern Uganda) or refugees and IDPs (Kurdistan Region of Iraq) means that its findings should not be necessarily extrapolated to all contexts.

The peer review methodology was grounded in a guided dialogue with staff and / or partners of organisations being reviewed on key components of “participation” throughout the project cycle. In addition, it included, where possible, focus group discussions with staff across-organisations, either expert or directly involved in programming, on issues related to cash programming and to protection. A limited number of focus group discussions were also held with some of the people being targeted for humanitarian assistance by one or several of the organisations reviewed, to get their perspective on their participation in decision – making on humanitarian programming. Annex 1 presents the itinerary of each mission, as well as people met.

Both peer review teams shared their findings upon return and agreed on the overall findings which are presented in this report. A summary of mission specific findings is presented in Annex 2 and 3.

**Peer review: participants and organisations reviewed**

The northern Uganda SCHR peer review team was comprised of the Head of Policy of the IFRC, the Global Humanitarian Coordinator of LWF, the Humanitarian Directors of Oxfam and Save the Children and Groupe URD’s Evaluator and Researcher, contracted to support the peer review. Organisations reviewed in northern Uganda included LWF, Oxfam, Save the Children and the Ugandan Red Cross, in relation to their work with South Sudanese refugee populations.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq SCHR peer review team was comprised of the Act Alliance Head of Strategy and Partnerships, the CARE International and CARITAS Internationalis Humanitarian Directors, the ICRC Gender and Diversity Advisor, the World Vision International Senior Director for External Engagement and Resource Development and the SCHR Executive Secretary. Organisations reviewed in the KRI included CARE, CRS and WV in relation to their work with Internally Displaced People and Syrian refugee populations.

Both teams are extremely grateful to the country programmes, their dedicated staff and that of their partners without whom their missions would not have been possible.

**Definition of participation**

The definition of participation used as basis for this overview is the one which has been agreed upon by the Grand Bargain “Participation Revolution” work stream:

*Effective “participation” of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision making, by actively engaging them throughout decision-making processes. This requires an ongoing dialogue about the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian responses with people, local actors and communities who are vulnerable or at risk, including those who often tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged, such as women, girls, and older persons[[2]](#footnote-2).*

**Parameter for an overarching framework for participation**

While recognising that effective participation looks very different from one humanitarian context to another, SCHR organisations agree on **the following parameters** for an overarching framework for participation of affected people in decisions related to the humanitarian response:

* **The Core Humanitarian Standard** (CHS)[[3]](#footnote-3)

The CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action that puts affected people at its centre. It is an essential element of effective participation.

* **The Programme Cycle**

Participation should take place throughout the programme cycle, grounded in on-going dialogue between people affected by crisis and humanitarian aid providers.

* **A common aspiration for what effective participation is meant to achieve.**

Imagining a “Participation continuum”, which starts with information sharing and progresses towards shared control and decision – making,

***Information sharing ► Consultation ► Collaboration ► Shared control and decision – making***

SCHR organisations come together around a common aspiration for collaboration at the very least, and shared control and decision-making between humanitarian organisations and people affected by crisis when the humanitarian response context permits.

# MAIN FINDINGS

This section proposes enablers and disenablers of effective participation which were identified by the peer review, broken down into three categories:

* Contextual enablers / disenablers: the degree to which these apply or not may vary considerably from one context to another
* Systemic enablers / disenablers relate to how international humanitarian assistance is structured in terms of decision-making power, coordination structures and resourcing.
* Organisational enablers / disenablers are related to how the organisation makes decisions, operates throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, resources its action, partners with others.

The review found that quite a few of the systemic enablers / disenablers are reflected in organisational approaches and systems, and that these in turn reinforce the systemic nature of these enablers and disenablers. These specific issues are presented as both systemic and organisational in the following tables.

**Overview of Findings: enablers of effective participation:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Context Specific** | **Systemic** | **Organisational** |
| * Active and outspoken people affected by crisis: affected people, including children, actively engage in participation mechanisms and are outspoken about their concerns and issues. * Affected people have a sense of community and accessible representation structures * Authorities engaged in leadership and coordination of the response and committed to giving affected people a voice in decisions which affect them. | * Flexible donors**:** donors which allow organisations to adapt their interventions according to affected people’s expressed needs, feedback and complaints. | * Proactive organisational culture and commitment to participation, in terms of leadership, mechanisms, investments and tools (ex. In the CHS, In training of staff, in allocation of resources to participation) * National staff and partners with local knowledge and access to affected people, including to different groups within the affected community. * Strategic partnerships with national and local organisations (in opposition to transactional partnerships). * Protection integrated as a cross-cutting community-based approach to identify and meet the needs of affected people. * Decision – making related to grant management and allocation of resources is close to project management |
|  | * Providers of assistance with capacity to respond to input from affected people * Providers of assistance which can invest in participation across sectors * Cash programming (as a means of giving more choice/options to affected people) * Good coordination / cross agency collaboration and inclusive leadership | |

**Overview of Findings: disenablers of effective participation:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Context specific** | **Systemic** | **Organisational** |
| * Lack of women and children’s voices and influence in public space * Authorities and affected communities with hierarchical top down practices of governance * Tension between participation of affected people and participation of government. | * Centralisation of decision making by UN lead agency and/or cluster coordinator on issues such as priority interventions, numbers of beneficiaries, targeting criteria, etc. * Funding of participation is project-based and sectoral * Short term and unpredictable funding * Insufficient funding * Delays in the grant allocation processes which creates frustration with affected people, and breaks the trust that they might have had in organisations. * Competition for resources across sectors and organisations | * Limited will and ability to understand affected people’s culture and social structures. * Limited efforts towards child participation, even when children represent most of the affected population and are eager to be involved in the life of their community * Gender narrowed down to specific pre-identified protection issues faced by women and girls (such as for example Gender Based Violence, early marriage, etc.) * A sectoral approach to the project cycle, including in terms of resourcing |
|  | * Different understanding of participation and different capacities to implement participation across organisations * Low participation at the initial stage of the response, as rapidity of response is prioritised * Programme targets and success indicators focus on numbers of beneficiaries, cost per beneficiary, etc. and do not facilitate reporting on participation outcomes * Too many different participation related reporting requirements[[4]](#footnote-4) (internal and external) * Focus on geographical areas of operation which are accessible, resourced and provide visibility rather than on areas where needs are highest (in contradiction with the principle of impartiality) * Limited access to affected people because of inadequate security or security management | |

**Specific issues, deemed to be critical to unlocking key disenablers.**

This section goes into more depth around specific issues, deemed to be critical to unlocking key disenablers.

* **Lack of a common understanding of participation and its purpose within and across stakeholders**

There is no a shared vision of what participation is supposed to achieve within and among all the stakeholders (authorities, donors, UN agencies, NGOs ...) intervening in the same context. The fundamental questions of what participation can aim to achieve in that context, from “information sharing” all the way to “joint decision - making”, or of how success is going to be measured, are neither systematically discussed within organisations, nor across organisations’ in-country leadership[[5]](#footnote-5), nor in coordination mechanisms, nor with people affected by crisis themselves. Effectively each organisation decides on what participation is going to entail within the framework of its own activities, which often translates into a project-by-project approach. The Iraq review team found that organisation’s frontline staff understood participation as “consultation” on specific project related questions, such as for example supplies to be included in a hygiene voucher pack or distribution modalities, while programme leadership raised concerns that operational decisions are driven by the need to demonstrate “value for money”, the framing of which is not perceived to integrate participation.

Working at developing a common understanding of what would constitute achievable participation objectives and good practices in each context could play an important part in helping progress towards participation as an essential cross cutting objective of organisations’ responses and provide the basis for solid collaboration and effective coordination.

* **Siloed approach to participation: sectoral and project-based resources and practices**

Participation is broken down by sectors of activity and by project. This reflects the way that funding is channelled through the international aid system from the donor all the way to the implementer, as well as global coordination structures and mechanisms. Each project has its own participation resources, as participation is not funded as a standalone area of work in support of the overall programme, only in support of specific project objectives.

This siloed approach to engagement with affected people is further re-enforced by the fact that there is limited interaction across sectors and projects and therefore few attempts to pool existing information together to gather a more comprehensive understanding of affected people’s needs, capacities and suggestions. The call centre/hotline set up in northern Iraq to centralise feedback from affected people receiving humanitarian assistance and refer it to the relevant organisation(s) for follow up action, provides an important feedback and complaints common service, but its aim is not to provide a comprehensive perspective on affected people’s needs. In northern Uganda, the proliferation of project-specific committees of affected people is such, that it’s almost impossible to get a clear overview of structures for engagement between communities and organisations providing assistance.

In short-term projects, it is often a challenge to dedicate sufficient human resources and time to consultation with affected people at the onset of the project cycle, and then to adjust the response to input received from affected people during the implementation and monitoring phases of the project. In addition, frequent significant time lags in the grant allocation process, between the initial assessment of needs and the start of implementation, impact negatively on the trust affected people may have had in the organisation providing assistance, and therefore their willingness to engagement constructively in participation outcomes.

The only examples of participation cutting across sectors and specific projects came when organisations had either allocated resources to participation mechanisms independently from project earmarking, or adopted a community-based approach to protection.

In addition to challenges to effectiveness, this siloed project-by-project approach to participation raises a fundamental question of efficiency, namely whether organisations could rationalise participation resources better with less of a sectoral focus and more of a people-centred approach.

**Centralised decision-making**

Organisations reviewed generally described their institutional donors as flexible in terms of adapting funding to best respond to needs articulated by affected people. The closer the decision-making authority related to grant management and allocation of resources to project or programme management, the easier it is for organisations to request course correctors from their donors. Generally, it was felt that donors with a representation close to operations were even more sympathetic to adapting grants to input from affected people.

Nevertheless, the review teams found that certain fundamental programming decisions were taken by the UN agency resourcing the programme, without the NGO in charge of implementation feeling that it had the power to influence such decisions, i.e. decisions related to targeting criteria and in certain cases, actual list of beneficiaries, in the case of food voucher distribution in northern Iraq, or of the type of blankets distributed in northern Uganda. This effectively leaves organisations in direct contact with affected people in no position to carry out meaningful engagement with them on issues related to vulnerability and needs, only on issues related to the organisation and the monitoring of the distribution. For affected people, the power dynamic is such that they are often left without any recourse when their requests are dismissed.

While prioritisation is necessary considering limited resources to cover all needs, centralisation of decision making undermines frontline organisations’ ability to carry out meaningful consultation with the affected people it is attempting to serve. The discussion on how to find the balance between deciding on the allocation of limited resources and giving space to operational organisations to carry out meaningful participation, is one which needs to take place at the Cluster and Inter-Cluster level, with referral to the Humanitarian Country Team as necessary. This requires substantive engagement by NGOs in these coordination mechanisms, as well as their ability to raise their concerns to a higher level when necessary, through global coordination or policy-making fora (such as for example the IASC Emergency Director’s Group or the IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected People) or directly to relevant UN agencies headquarters.

* **Needs assessments versus needs analysis**

The siloed approach described above is reflected at the initial stage of the programme cycle, as organisations carry out their own largely sectoral needs assessments, often using different methodologies from one organisation to another, which makes it a challenge to compare and analyse data consistently. This sectorisation of data and information is further reinforced by limited exchange of information between organisations working in different population settlements, further limiting the ability to rank or compare needs from one geographic area to another.

The review teams question whether the focus at the onset of the response on assessments (sectoral) rather than on analysis (situational and contextual and includes cross-cutting issues, such as protection, inclusion / exclusion, gender, etc.) is one of the main challenges in progressing from a project-by-project sectoral approach to participation to a people-centred one.

* **Partnerships between international and national and / or local organisations**

All interviewees concurred on the importance for effective participation of national staff and partners who have knowledge and access to affected people, including to different groups within the affected community. The ability to have direct communication with affected people in their local language and based on in-depth understanding of their cultural and social norms is essential.

The northern Iraq review indicated that national / local organisations do not necessarily value and invest in participation as a matter of course. It appears that grassroots organisation may not all value participation as such, believing that they already know what affected people need and want, as they come from the community that they serve. National organisations which have more experience of working with international partners, appear to be more geared to participation, but may see it as a requirement imposed by their international partners and their donors. They often also struggle with the multiple overlapping participation related requirements passed on to them by their different INGO partners. In situations of partnership between international, national and local organisations, making this partnership strategic is central to effective participation, as all parties negotiate and agree together on participation outcomes, approaches and follow up, and own the result jointly. In the case of transactional relationships, international organisations pass on participation requirements to their national or local partners, who are then more likely to approach these as a tick box exercise.

* **Cash transfer programming (CTP)**

There seems to be a consensus among those interviewed that cash transfer programming, when it is appropriate in terms of proximity to functioning markets, and provided it is based on a proper analysis of vulnerabilities, capacities and threats, can enable participation, as affected people are able to choose what assistance to access. Nevertheless, CTP responses considered as part of this review were voucher-based rather than cash-based, and very little thought seemed to have gone into opportunities and challenges of moving towards unconditional cash transfers. Part of the reason for this, at least in northern Iraq, has been that unconditional cash has not been supported by government policies; other reasons include the challenge that such an approach poses to existing humanitarian approaches and coordination structures and the outstanding questions around how to measure its impact and outcomes.

A lot of work is being done at the global level, under the auspices of CaLP to address these issues, but limited discussions seem to be happening in – country within each organisation. It may be helpful to consider whether such discussions at country level, initiated from a participation perspective, could contribute new perspectives and ideas.

* **Two-way communication and balancing inputs from participation with expert knowledge**

It is necessary to balance inputs from participation with expertknowledge, as some essential needs may not be expressed by affected people, either because they relate to prevention of epidemics or public health hazards or because of stigma, such as for example in the case of mental health.

To ensure that affected people can be fully involved in informed decision-making, it is crucial to make them aware of the relevance and importance of responding to such unexpressed needs, of the characteristics (roles, mandates, financing mechanisms and constraints, etc.) of the organisations serving them, and of the technical or strategic framework of certain interventions. The review teams did not see any evidence of clear strategies to provide such information to affected people.

Organisations working with the same populations need to consider pooling resources to provide affected people with basic information on their characteristics and translate relevant expert knowledge into language that can be easily understood.

* **Capacities and approaches to participation**

Even though organisations are generally committed to participation, capacities, approaches and tools are very different from one organisation to another. This is especially problematic when different participatory approaches are adopted in relation to the same affected population. At the very least, organisations need to ensure that their participatory approaches are not hampering each other’s. In northern Uganda, it appeared that the more organisations are active in each settlement, the more likely it is that they end up competing over incentives for affected people involvement in project related committees.

There seems to be an unexamined assumption that participation is impossible in the initial phase of acute emergency response, which then impacts negatively on participation throughout the programme cycle, especially when organisations do not have unearmarked resources that they can allocate to participation outside of specific project funding.

The organisations reviewed in the northern Uganda and northern Iraq appeared to have different approaches and capacities for engaging with different groups of affected people, based on sex, age, ethnicity and disability. Beyond ensuring the capacity within an organisation to engage with each relevant group, understanding cultural and social norms as they relate to power and inclusion is essential. One of the recommendations put forward by several reviewers was to consider bringing in anthropologists at different stages of the response, to ensure that organisations are not inadvertently creating or re-enforcing conflict or discrimination across different groups.

# CONCLUSIONS

This peer review has demonstrated SCHR organisations’ commitment and dedication to participation. It has also shown to what extent systemic constraints to an affected people centred approach to humanitarian decision – making are translated into organisations’ systems and ways of working, with these then further reinforcing the systemic nature of these constraints. Making greater participation a reality is going to requires approaches and measures aimed at systemic, not only organisational, impact.

This report aims at providing an understanding of the current state of play of participation, as carried out by SCHR organisations. It purposely does not provide any recommendations for action, even though a broad course of action may be implicit in some of the findings. It is anticipated that each SCHR organisation will review these findings internally, to decide on appropriate priorities and action at an organisational level, as well as on its contribution to SCHR’s High-Level Conference in January 2018 which aims at sector-wide learning and an agenda to make the commitment to greater participation and local ownership a reality.

# Annex 1: Itinerary of the missions and people met

**Uganda programme**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Place** | **Activity** | **People met** |
| 18/09/17 | Moyo | Travel to Moyo |  |
| Meeting with UNHCR | Head of sub-office and heads of sectoral units |
| Basecamp for Palorinya settlement | Meeting with LWF management group (approx. 15) | Programme officers, head units and assistants |
| Focus group discussions with LWF field workers – Cash based intervention (approx. 10); Protection (15) | Field workers |
| 19/09/17 | Bidibidi settlement | Interviews | OPM (Settlement commandant)  UNHCR (Head of office) |
| Focus group discussions with community members (approx. 40 men and 20 women) | Refugees |
| Meeting with senior manager of various organisations | Fin Church Aid, WVI, Uganda Red Cross, URDMC, Save the Children, DRC, Oxfam |
| Focus group discussions with various organisations – Cash based intervention (approx. 7); Protection (10) | Save the Children, WVI, Uganda Red Cross, Plan International, IRC, War Child Canada, ARC, CEFORD, DCA, |
| 20/09/17 | Arua | Interview | OPM |
| Meeting with senior manager of various organisations | Oxfam, CEFORD, Uganda Red Cross, Save the Children, Care, IAS |
| Basecamp for Rhino Settlement | Interview | OPM (Settlement commandant) |
| Focus group discussions with various organisations (12) | Care, Oxfam, CEFOD, Save the Children, DRC, Uganda Red Cross, NRC, IAS |
|  | Discussion with a group of youth (approx. 15 boys and 30 girls) | Refugees |
| 21/09/17 | Kampala | Meeting with senior manager | LWF, Save the Children, Oxfam, Mercy corps, ACTED, War Child Holland, MTI, Handicap International, CRS, AVSI Foundation, Isra AId |

**Kurdistan Region of Iraq programme**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Place** | **Interviews / FGD** |
| 18/09/17 | Erbil | Interview with WVI Erbil based project coordinators  Interview with WVI SLT  Interview with CRS, Cordaid and Caritas Tcheque SLT |
| 19/09/17 | Dohuk | Interview with CARE SLT and project staff and with management and project staff of Harikar, CARE partner  Interview with WVI Dohuk based project staff  Interview with CRS and Caritas Iraq Kurdistan- based project staff |
| 20/09/17 | Chamisku IDP camp, Zakho | Separate FGD with female and male displaced youth, and with male and female displaced adults.  Interview with enumerators working for Harikar  Interview with the IDP Camp Manager (Government representative) |
| 21/09/17 | Qoshtapa refugee camp, Erbil  Erbil | Qoshtapa Syrian refugees camp: Interview with WV project staff  Debrief with CRS SLT representative  Debrief with WVI SLT representatives |

# Annex 2: Summary of main findings, SCHR Peer review in northern Uganda -18-21 September 2017

**Enablers of participation:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External to the organisation** | **Internal to the organisation** |
| * Government commitments and investments**:** the national and local government is fully engaged in the humanitarian response for the refugees through the Office of the Prime Minister, including facilitating formal elections to the Refugee Welfare Councils * Active and outspoken people affected by crisis: affected people, including children, actively engage in participation mechanisms and are outspoken about their concerns and issues * Flexible donors**:** Several donors, especially when they have proximity to operations, are reported to be flexible and allow organisations to adapt their interventions according to affected people’s expressed needs, feedback and complaints | * Strong desire by NGOs-RC/RC to promote participation, and deployment of mechanisms, tools and investment (ex. In training) * National staff and partners with local knowledge and access * Strategic partnerships versus transactional partnerships |

**Disenablers of participation :**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External** | **Internal** |
| * Centralisation of decision making (UN agencies, donors ,…) * Competition for resources across sectors and organisations * Funding of participation is project-oriented * Short term and unpredictable funding * Insufficient funding * Delays in the grant allocation process which creates frustration with affected people, and breaks the trust that they might have had in organisations. | * Limited will and ability to understand affected people’s culture and social structures. * “Sectoralisaton” throughout the project cycle * “Sectoralisation” of funding and resourcing * Little efforts towards child participation even though children represent most of the refugee population and are eager to be involved in the life of their community |

**QUESTIONS / ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

* **No common understanding of participation and its purpose:** There isn’t a shared vision of what participation is supposed to achieve. Participation is initiated by humanitarian organisations, to serve their programmatic purposes, it does not capture affected people’s aspirations.
* **Low participation at the initial stage of the response (including when refugees change site).** There is an unexamined assumption that participation is impossible in “the emergency stage” – even though the response was organized by many, very experienced emergency response organizations, which should, in theory, not be caught completely off guard by the exigencies of a crisis.
* **Siloed sectoral approach and inadequate information sharing across sectors:** 
  + Information sharing across the sectors is unequal from one settlement to another
  + A lot of data is collected from affected people through different methods, presented in different formats, and owned by the organisation who collected the data
  + Measurement of participation and/or satisfaction of beneficiaries is not currently a priority for organizations, the UN or back donors
  + There seems to be an over-reliance on sectoral needs assessment at the expense of a broader situation and context analysis
  + It is not clear that organizations are ready to effectively process the views of affected persons to rapidly inform decision-making
* **Different participation capacities across organisations:** Even though, generally, organisations are promoting participation, capacities and tools are very different from one organisation to another. This is especially problematic when different participatory approaches are adopted with the same affected population. Only a few organisations may have child participation knowledge and skills.
  + How can all organisations and institutions working with affected people have some minimum ability and capacity for participation, including child participation?
  + How can one organisations’ participatory approaches not hamper those of another organisation?
* **Balancing inputs from participation with expert knowledge:** This is essential as some needs may not be expressed by affected people, either because the needs relate to prevention or because of stigma attached, such as for ex. mental health.
* **Partnership with refugee based and local organisations:** Local and refugees based organisation have important added value in terms of participation as they have local languages knowledge and better “cultural access”, nevertheless:
  + Each INGO has its own set of participation related requirements which it then passes on to its partners
  + Local organizations are not necessary integrated in all coordination mechanisms,

# Annex 3: Summary of main findings, SCHR Peer review in Kurdistan Region of Iraq -18-21 September 2017

**Enablers of participation:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External to the organisation** | **Internal to the organisation** |
| * Affected people have a sense of community and representation structures * Government engagement and commitment * Flexible donors and donor continuity * Affected people have experience of engaging with humanitarian actors | * Capacity to respond to input from affected people * Holistic versus sectoral resources * Protection as a cross-cutting community-based approach to identify and meet the needs of affected pop. * Strategic partnerships versus transactional partnerships. * Cash as a means of giving more choice/options to affected people * Organization's intent, mechanism and tools and investment (ex. In training) * Good coordination / cross agency collaboration * National staff and partners with local knowledge and access * Access & interaction with different voices within affected communities |

**Disenablers of participation :**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External to the organisation** | **Internal to the organisation** |
| * Hierarchical top down practice of governance * Lack of women’s voice and influence in public space * Tension between participation of affected people and participation of government. * Security/access * Centralisation of decision making (UN Agencies, Clusters, Government, etc…) * Competition for resources across sectors and organisations * Security/access * Targets, indicators focus on numbers of beneficiaries, cost per beneficiary, etc. * Focus is on areas which are accessible, resourced and provide visibility rather than on areas where needs are highest (principle of impartiality) * Short term and unpredictable funding * Insufficient funding * Donors do not cover participation related costs as a stand-alone: funding of participation is projectised | * Sectoralisaton across the project cycle * Sectoralisation of funding and resourcing * Decision – making mechanisms and processes (grant management, allocation of resources, selection of beneficiaries, etc.) * Participation related reporting requirements (internal and external) |

**QUESTIONS / ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

* **No common understanding of participation and its purpose:** There isn’t a shared vision of what participation is supposed to achieve. Participation is initiated by humanitarian organisations, to serve their programmatic purposes, it does not capture affected people’s aspirations.
* **Low participation at the initial stage of the response, as rapidity of response is prioritised:** are the two mutually exclusive?
* **Balancing inputs from participation with expert knowledge:** This is essential as some essential needs may not be expressed by affected people, either because the needs relate to prevention or because of stigma attached, such as for ex. mental health.
* **Partnership with refugee based and local organisations:** Local and refugees based organisation have valuable added value in terms of participation as they have local languages knowledge and better “cultural access”, nevertheless:
  + Each INGO has its own set of participation related requirements which it then passes on to its partners,
  + Local or national organisations do not necessarily do participation better than international actors,
  + National or local organisations have different understanding of participation depending on whether they are grassroot or more institutionalised organisations
* **Needs assessments versus needs analysis and resource requirement implications:**
  + Are we over-focussing on sectoral needs assessment at the expense of situation and context analysis, including cross-cutting issues?
  + Are we able to effectively process all the data we collect to inform decision-making?
  + Could we rationalise resources better with less of a sectoral focus and more of a people centered approach?
  + Could participation be less resource intensive if participation funding was less projectivised?
* **Unconditional cash**: why is it so problematic for the sector?
  + Is it helping the most vulnerable including within households?
  + How do we measure the impact of such interventions?

1. The contexts were chosen because they are conflict contexts, as SCHR’s July’s overview of participation practices identified these as presenting more challenges to participation than natural hazard induced disaster contexts. They were also chosen because of the concentration of SCHR organisations programmes (a requirement considering the peer review’s short time frame). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The full definition can be found at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc/documents/final-participation-revolution-work-stream-recommendations> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [**The Core Humanitarian Standard**](https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. One organisations’ MEAL coordinator in northern Iraq described having to meet seven different sets of participation -related reporting requirements, four external ones and three internal ones. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In Uganda, the International Rescue Committee, in partnership with the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the Uganda National NGO Forum held a workshop on the use of beneficiary feedback on 25 April 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)