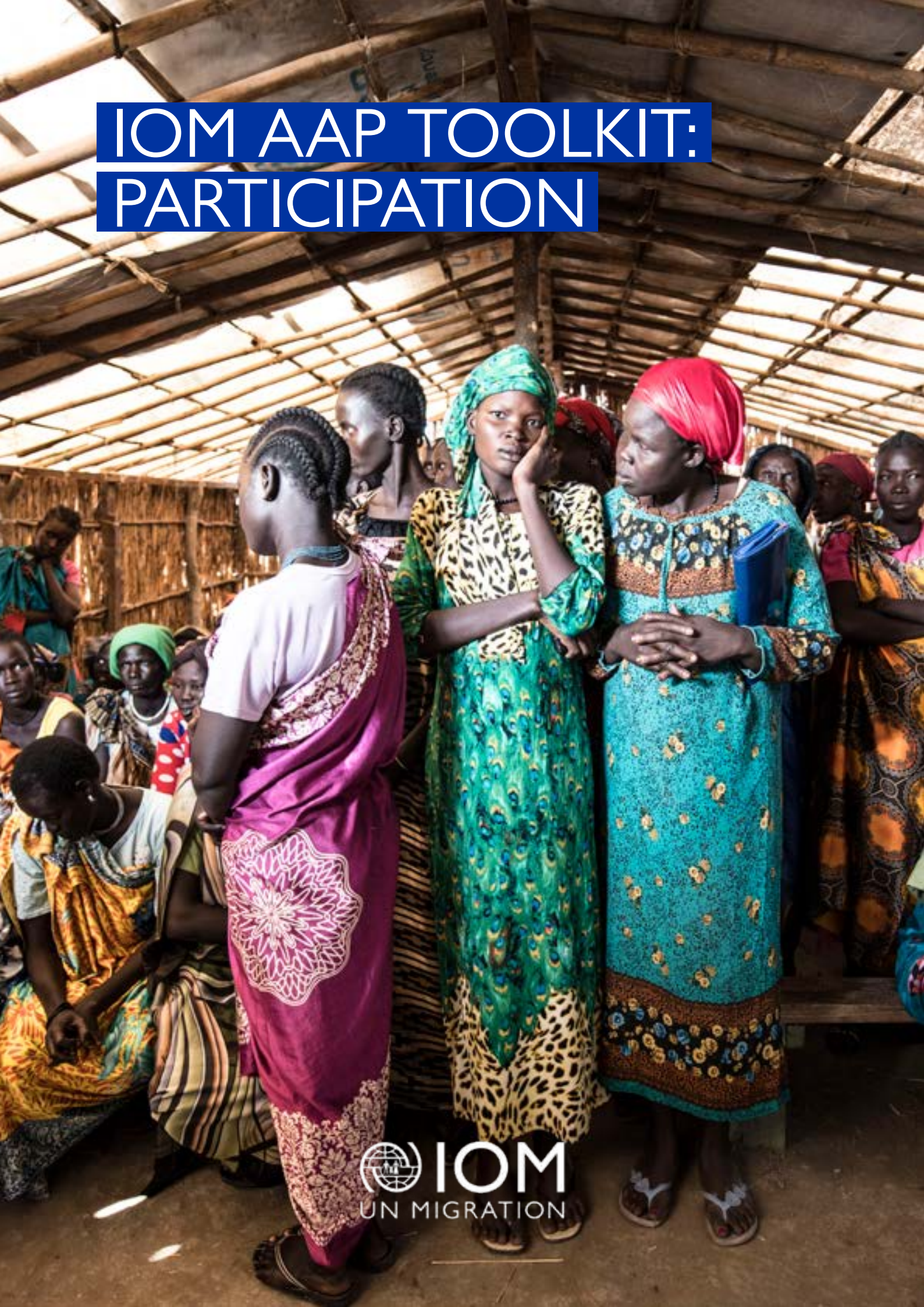


IOM AAP TOOLKIT: PARTICIPATION



IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in the meeting of operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Group discussion with women prior to training on construction of fuel-efficient stoves in Rubkona, Unity State, South Sudan. © IOM 2018/Rikka TUPAZ

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1. PARTICIPATION

Participation is often considered the core of good accountability for affected populations (AAP) practice and central to relevant and effective programming in the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It is critical that participation be inclusive to ensure that affected people can exert influence and shape the design, implementation and evaluation of a programme. Participation should involve a diverse section of people with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized. It is crucial that affected people from different groups based on gender, age, health, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language and other diversities can equally participate.

IOM has extensive experience in community participation through its various community-based programmes, such as community stabilization, reintegration, camp coordination and camp management and disaster risk reduction and resilience programme to name a few. There is a whole chapter dedicated to [community participation in the camp management toolkit](#) for guidance and additional references.

1.1. Inclusive participation

Community consultations and participatory methods must be inclusive and have diverse participants coming from all groups. Inclusive participation is key to receiving accurate information and feedback from communities, ensuring that all sectors and groups, particularly the most marginalized, such as persons with disability (PWDs), elderly with mobility challenges and other marginalized groups, are represented. Community voices from a representation of different groups and avoiding over-reliance on community leaders are critical to best inform the design, implementation and monitoring of IOM assistance and services.

One of the best practices in focus group discussions (FGDs) is consulting groups separately by gender and age to arrive at the nearest accurate sentiment and feedback specific to the group. Conducting FGDs participated by women only is highly likely to provide feedback on issues specific to women, as with men-only FGD raising issues specific to men. In some contexts, conducting FGDs participated only by girls will reveal issues concerning them only, issues that girls may not be comfortable to share openly with adult women around. Inclusive participation does not necessarily require that all representatives should be consulted together. What is crucial is all the groups can participate on equal footing.

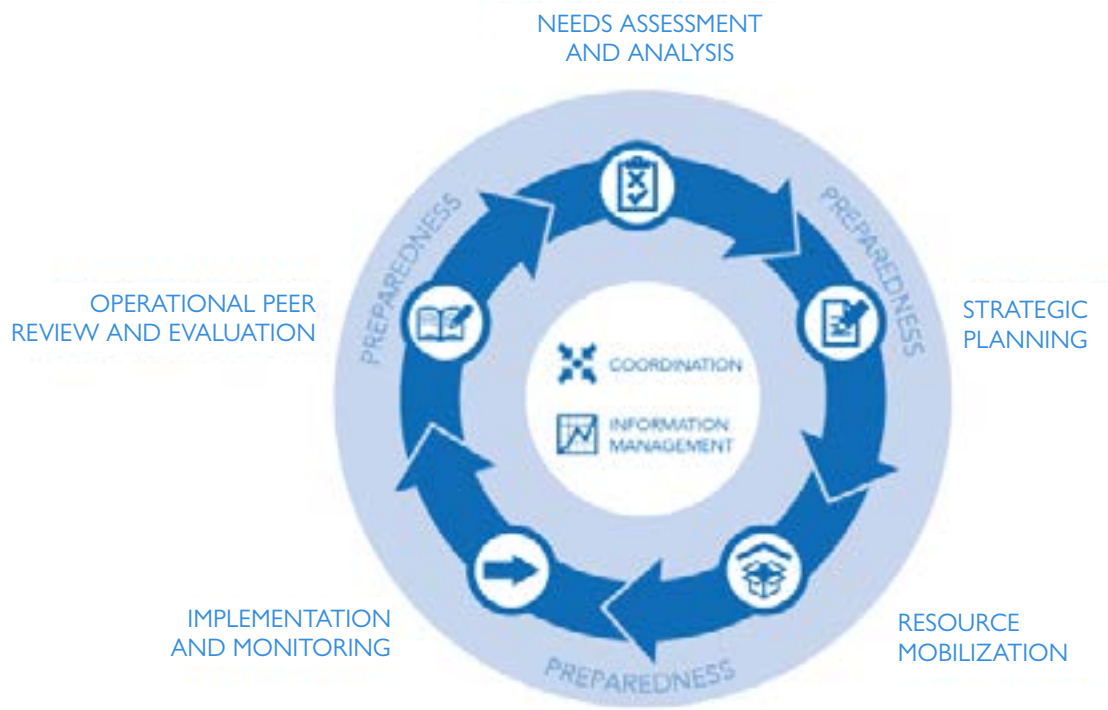
1.2. Informed participants

It is likewise critical that the affected people are given adequate information in order to have meaningful participation. Knowing who is assisting them, what type of assistance or services is being provided and what they are entitled to empowers affected people to make their voices heard.

1.3. Participation throughout the entire programme cycle

Participatory methods shall be conducted at all stages of the IOM programme cycle: planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in a systematic manner.

Figure 1. The Humanitarian Programme Cycle¹



2. PARTICIPATORY METHODS

There is a variety of participatory methods for consulting affected people to identify needs and priorities in order to assist in planning, designing and implementing programmes. It is highly encouraged to use combinations of these methods to bring out the best quality of information and participation of communities. The most commonly used community participation methods in IOM are FGDs, key informant interviews, public forum and community-based feedback mechanisms.

Additional guidance on participatory methods are available in the camp management toolkit, including grievance committees, camp committees and participatory structures supporting conflict management and capacity-building.

2.1. Preparing for participatory activities

- **Clear objectives:** Be clear about the objectives. Begin with a clear idea on what needs to be achieved from the participatory activity. For example, if the objective of the interview is to understand why people are not using the latrines, be clear about the scope of the interview and how their answers will be crucial in improving the IOM water, sanitation and hygiene services.

It is common that a participant of a discussion will bring up issues unrelated to the set objectives. Take note of the feedback or complaint and reassure the participant that this has been documented for review, then take the discussion back to the topic. If the feedback or complaint raised is unrelated but sensitive, take note of the feedback or complaint raised and talk to the individual separately after the activity; if necessary, remind all participants of confidentiality issues and the voluntary nature of participation. The participants should be informed that there is no requirement to share information or concerns that they are not comfortable discussing in an FGD setting.

- **Diverse team composition:** Ensure that the team is as varied as possible (male, female, old, young and a variety of nationalities and languages as applicable). This is important when breaking out the group and consulting them separately by gender, age and other identified diversity consistent to the set objective of the activity. Some participants may not be comfortable to engage with someone other than their gender or age, and as a result, the expected result of the discussion may not be achieved.
- **Appropriate language and recording:** Ensure that the team composition has members who can speak and understand the language of the community that will be engaged and consulted with. If this is not possible, assign a translator and make sure the translator has been briefed on the objectives and confidentiality of the discussions. It is ideal that the assigned transcriber can understand and write the language. In any case, do not forget to ask for consent from the participants when recording interviews and discussions by audio, video and written recording.
- **Logistics and security protocols:** Ensure the appropriateness of the tools to be used. For example, if graphic and visual aids will be used, make sure these are culturally and socially appropriate to the context. When conducting a forum in a particular venue, ensure that it is accessible to PWDs and those with mobility challenges. Do not forget to file the Travel Request Information Processing (TRIP) with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), as applicable.
- **Time frame:** Remember to set aside sufficient time to complete the task, which may change as a result of ideas provided by the people who were initially consulted. Do not forget to include travel time in organizing the participatory activity.

- **Observation:** It is possible to gather initial information by observation to prepare for community consultation and participatory activity. By observing social dynamics in a community and the apparent conditions, an initial selection of target participants for a participatory activity can be made. It is also good to observe the community's general behaviour towards IOM, whether they are warm or aggressive towards the team in order to assess the timeliness in conducting a community FGD.

2.2. Key informant interviews



2.2.1. Who is a key informant?

A key informant can be someone in the community that could provide the most meaningful and useful information in answering the objectives of the interview. Answering the question “What do you want to know?” can lead to determine “Who do you want to ask?” In good practice, an IOM staff should ask who the community leaders are and who could provide information to particular questions. Key informants

may include local authorities, religious leaders and persons traditionally perceived as trustworthy in the community, such as teachers and health personnel, officers from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs).

2.2.2. Tips: How to select key informants

- Choose the individual who could provide the most meaningful information, especially where a difference in opinion might affect the way a condition or design of a programme is presumed. It is crucial that the objective of the interview should be clear so the information needed will be identified.
- When applicable, consult and coordinate with the field operations and monitoring team. It is likely that they already know the key informants for specific concerns and issues in the communities.
- Observation could also be used to investigate and make an estimation on who among the individuals in the community could provide the necessary information.

2.3. Focus group discussions

FGDs is the most widely used participatory method when consulting with communities. FGDs provide an opportunity to tackle specific issues and are also used to further explore sensitive topics that communities may raise within a group with common concerns and characteristics. The set objectives of an FGD will determine the group composition, number of participants and the time and location of activity. Broader topics, for example, may have a larger number of participants and may be conducted with all representatives of different groups gathered together.

It is normal to hold an FGD with a bigger group and later break them down to smaller groups to discuss more targeted issues. Sensitive and specific issues are advised to be discussed with fewer participants who share similar concerns and group characteristics. One FGD for a meaningful topic may not be enough. More than one FGD session is needed to ensure good coverage of responses to a set of topics.

2.3.1. Pointers when conducting focus group discussions

(a) FGDs with smaller number of individuals sharing common concerns

- **Group composition:** Organize the discussion with a smaller number of individuals that share similar and often sensitive concerns. For example, one FGD may be with a group of young women in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) with alleged sex-for-food issues, another interview may be with a group of married women in host communities with alleged gender-based violence (GBV) issues.
- **Group size:** A small group would normally be composed of not more than seven (7) individuals. Emphasize the purpose of the FGD and that everyone can participate, and that all ideas, however diverse, are welcome.
- **Location:** Meetings should be held in venues that ensure privacy, comfort and with seating arrangements that allow the maximum interaction between participants.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants should be reassured that confidentiality will be kept throughout, in that no names or personal information will be disclosed or used in any publications or reports without their consent. When audio recording the FGD, inform the participants that this is being done. Make sure to secure their clear and informed consent before starting the recording.

(b) FGDs with larger number of participants for broader topics

- **Group composition:** It is not necessary that the participants share similar concerns. However, more specific topics may be raised in broad discussions. When specific topics are raised, take note of them and ensure to be in touch with the participant raising the concern for further explanation or description. It is important that people are assured that their feedback and insights are respected.
- **Group size:** Depending on the objective of the participatory activity, the number of participants can be as many as possible, so long as it is manageable for the facilitators. Regardless of the number, emphasize the purpose of the FGD and that everyone can participate and that all ideas, however diverse, are welcome.
- **Location:** Meetings should be held in venues that ensure privacy, comfort and with seating arrangements that allow the maximum interaction between participants.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants should be reassured that confidentiality will be kept throughout, in that no names or personal information will be disclosed or used in any publications or reports without their consent. When audio recording the FGD, inform the participants that this is being done. Make sure to secure their consent before starting the recording.

2.3.2. Quick guide in preparing for focus group discussions

Clear objectives	Team composition	Diverse FGD participants	Accessible time and location	Recording and confidentiality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear objectives and purpose • Explain the scope and time frame of the activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age and gender diverse team: facilitator, transcriber and translator (as applicable) • Working knowledge of local language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse by age, gender and other gender diversity, health, ethnicity (as applicable) and others • Consulted separately by age, gender and other diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible location for PWDs and persons with mobility challenges • Accessible time for people with occupations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure consent of the participants when recording an FGD • Records of names and information that may lead to identify the participants are strictly confidential unless waived by the participants

Clear objectives

Set clear objectives for the FGD. Explain the purpose why the communities are being consulted and what the information they share is for. To set expectations correctly, explain the scope of the discussion and set a time frame of the activity. The FGD may be conducted for an hour to discuss all issues about IOM assistance or for 30 minutes to interview them about how they think IOM services can be improved.

Team composition and description

- **Facilitator:** The facilitator manages the FGD, ensuring it has set objectives and conducts the activity in an inclusive, confidential and respectful manner. He/She should have knowledge and the experience in engaging people to have meaningful conversations. The facilitator should make sure that participants are comfortable to share their views and should understand the importance of assisting all participants

to speak. The facilitator should have the ability to manage participants dominating the discussion and steer the discussion back to the set objectives when more issues that digress from the topic dominate the discussion.

- **Translator:** FGDs should be conducted in the language the participants feel most comfortable with. The translator should understand the confidentiality of the discussion and respectful of the views of the participants. He/She should never include his/her views nor try to influence the participants to take his/her views when translating in the discussions.
- **Transcriber:** It is ideal to have at least two people in the team conducting the FGD – one asking the questions and one transcribing the responses.

2.3.3. Tips for the facilitator

- Before starting the FGD, build rapport with the participants. Strike up a casual chat to set a warm and accepting mood for sharing ideas. Topics may include the weather, a sports event, a community celebration and the like. After an exchange of pleasantries, smoothly transition to the introduction of participants and the team. In some contexts, be mindful that some of the participants have suffered great loss and trauma. It is advisable to spend some time showing genuine interest in the people being spoken to, learning about them and putting them at ease.
- Start the FGD by introducing the team and explaining the reason of the visit. It is important to explain the objectives and purpose to avoid raising expectations. Be very clear that if there are questions about community needs, the FGD is only one of the processes to correctly identify what the priority needs are. Never make promises.
- Before starting the discussion, the ground rules may be agreed upon. This is useful in FGDs with a significant number of participants. Some examples are raising a hand before speaking, not interrupting and no heckling while someone is speaking. The ground rules, however, should not end up like a teacher–student dynamic that may hamper openness in sharing thoughts and concerns. Ask the participants if they have any suggestions.
- If the discussion might touch upon some sensitive issues, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption and protection issues and GBV, ensure participants that there is no requirement to share information or concerns that they are not comfortable discussing with other people. Participation is completely voluntary, and participants are free to answer or that they can leave at any point. Reiterate that the discussions are confidential.
- Reassure participants that confidentiality will be kept throughout in that no names or personal information will be disclosed or used in any publications/reports.
- The facilitator sets out the topics of the FGDs, and he/she may start with questions to open the discussion. The questions should be framed in an “open-ended” manner, enabling participants to respond candidly and freely. Avoid leading questions. (Leading questions suggests the particular desired answer or contains the information the examiner is looking to have confirmed. It is crafted in a way to influence the responder to take a particular point of view.)

Examples		
Leading question or Yes/No question		Open-ended question
Should we select lactating women with children living in Camp 12 for the livelihood programme?	Versus	How do you think we should select our beneficiaries for the livelihood programme?
Shouldn't we agree that a kitchen set is the most needed household item right now?		What do you think are the most needed household items for your family right now?
The open area beside the mango tree would be the best place to have our non-food item (NFI) distribution, don't you think?		Where do you think is most suitable for you to receive your NFI kits?

2.3.4. Addressing aggressive behaviour and crowd control in focus group discussions

The nature of work in humanitarian settings is that even the best-laid plans for an FGD are likely to change, as sudden issues may arise at the venue while the FGD is ongoing. Here are sample scenarios that may happen in an FGD and a few tips in avoiding them or handling them should they happen.

- (a) A few minutes into the FGD session, a group of people started to crowd near and became aggressive. They demanded to participate in the FGD because they felt they were excluded. How can this be avoided from happening next time?
- Preparation is key. Advance notice to communities on the planned FGD is important. Explain the objectives and purpose of the FGD.
 - Involve the community at planning stage, particularly in selecting the participants and the groups to be represented. Consult with community leaders from all the different groups and agree on the process of selecting participants from each group.
 - Ensure the level of privacy of the venue. The FGD participants should not be overheard by non-participants such as power figures or curious bystanders who may disrupt the sessions and intimidate the participants to not speak up.
 - Choose a neutral and relaxed environment for location.

(b) How can aggressive and disruptive behaviour of the FGD participants be avoided during the session?

- Build rapport with the participants. Before the start of the session, strike up a casual chat to set a warm and accepting mood for sharing ideas. Topics may include the weather, a sports victory, a recent national festivity or celebration and the like.
- Explain the objectives of the FGD clearly and set their expectations correctly. Never make promises.
- Agree with the participants on the ground rules. Ask them for suggestions. Some examples are raising one's hand to speak, not interrupting while someone is speaking and no heckling when someone is talking.
- Gauge the mood of the group and adjust the approach when there is tension during the discussion. If sensitive issues are raised, acknowledge them and steer the discussion away. When appropriate, make a follow-up at the end of the session and refer to appropriate officers and agencies.

(c) Despite the preparation, some people who were not selected to be part of the FGD started to gather and crowd around the team because they wanted to be heard too. What should be done?

- Keep calm. Acknowledge their presence and concerns. Thank them for their time and interest to participate.
- Be transparent. Explain to them the objectives of the FGD. When applicable, clarify that no favor is given to the participants.
- Take this opportunity to inform them of using the complaints and feedback mechanism for their issues and concerns.
- When appropriate, talk to them at the end of the FGD and explore any follow-up action.

3. TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE PARTICIPATION

Building mutual respect	Communication techniques
Assess the motives and goals regularly to ensure that these are not simply being used as a way of reaching personal pre-set objectives.	The manner of communicating, the attitude and behaviour, is as important as the chosen participation method.
It is important to be aware of the attitudes, behaviour and how other people's perceptions of the team can either create barriers or build bridges.	By using both formal methods and taking informal opportunities to communicate with people, understanding of the situation is improved and the kind of relationships needed for successful participation is built.
Adopting culturally appropriate behaviour and clothing demonstrates respect for the people being worked with.	Communication is a two-way process and involves listening, learning and adapting one's part.
Interpreters do more than translate words. To a large extent, they "translate" the team to the other party. Time spent building understanding and developing ways of working with an interpreter is time well spent.	The personal behaviour and attitudes will determine the quality of the communication and the relationship to the people being communicated with.
Sharing information and being transparent about the aims, constraints and influences is a necessary part of a trusting, respectful relationship.	Why, how, when and with whom to communicate should all be part of a participation strategy.



Example: Art as a modality for participation activities

Art-based events or activities can serve to apply a human-centred approach, improving social cohesion between migrants or IDPs in transit, returnees and community members. This can be particularly effective where art is deployed as a unifying activity in communities.

Things to consider before using art in participation activities:

- Audience: Who is the audience, is it appropriate to use art?
- Aims: Can the aims of the participatory activity using art be achieved?
- Circumstances: Is an informal or a formal activity more suitable? Art is an indirect engagement. This can be particularly useful for engaging those who are less willing to speak up; however, circumstances can sometimes prohibit the usefulness/relevance of art as a participatory activity.

Example: IOM's community mobilizers or "MobComs" facilitated the participatory street art activities and engaged with the public in the Niger's transit centres. They have already become regular friendly faces among community members and migrants in transit, and so MobComs have access to a wide range of neighbourhoods.

In Niamey and Agadez, artists worked alongside the migrants staying at IOM's transit centres to decorate their temporary homes. Neighbours, local associations and schools also approached IOM during the project's implementation, asking to be included.

"The project uses participatory public art as a way for migrants to give back to their host communities, while creating meaningful interactions in the process," said Luca Putteman, IOM's Regional Awareness Officer. "It's also important for returned migrants to feel welcome and to be able to reintegrate properly in their communities."

Read more about this project [here](#) or watch this [video](#).



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