Chapter 12

Community participation

'The myth that the affected population is too shocked and helpless to take responsibility for their own survival is superceded by the reality that on the contrary, many find new strength during an emergency' (Goyet, 1999).

It is the strong conviction of the authors that communities affected by disasters should be given the maximum opportunity to participate in emergency relief programmes. Participation, here, does not simply mean being involved in the construction of facilities, it means contributing ideas, making decisions and taking responsibility. All too often refugees and displaced people are treated by relief agencies as helpless entities that need to be fed, watered and sheltered. The fact that they are people with considerable knowledge, skills, empathy and pride is often overlooked or forgotten.

12.1 What is meant by community participation?

Community participation can be loosely defined as the involvement of people in a community in projects to solve their own problems. People cannot be forced to 'participate' in projects which affect their lives but should be given the opportunity where possible. This is held to be a basic human right and a fundamental principle of democracy. Community participation is especially important in emergency sanitation programmes where people may be unaccustomed to their surroundings and new sanitation facilities.

Community participation can take place during any of the following activities:

- **Needs assessment** – expressing opinions about desirable improvements, prioritising goals and negotiating with agencies
- **Planning** – formulating objectives, setting goals, criticising plans
- **Mobilising** – raising awareness in a community about needs, establishing or supporting organisational structures within the community
- **Training** – participation in formal or informal training activities to enhance communication, construction, maintenance and financial management skills
- **Implementing** – engaging in management activities; contributing directly to construction, operation and maintenance with labour and materials; contributing cash towards costs, paying of services or membership fees of community organisations

- **Monitoring and evaluation** – participating in the appraisal of work done, recognising improvements that can be made and redefining needs

Most emergency sanitation programmes tend to be designed and executed by the relief agency, however, this does not mean that the community is unable or unwilling to participate in some or all of the activities outlined above.

12.1.1 Incentives of community participation

The following are some of the main reasons why people are usually willing to participate in humanitarian programmes:

- Community participation motivates people to work together – people feel a sense of community and recognise the benefits of their involvement.
- Social, religious or traditional obligations for mutual help
- Genuine community participation – people see a genuine opportunity to better their own lives and for the community as a whole
- Remuneration in cash or kind

There are often strong genuine reasons why people wish to participate in programmes. All too often aid workers assume that people will only do anything for remuneration and have no genuine concern for their own predicament or that of the community as a whole. This is often the result of the actions of the agency itself, in throwing money or food at community members without meaningful dialogue or consultation. Remuneration is an acceptable incentive but is usually not the only, or even the primary, motivation.

12.1.2 Disincentives to community participation

The following are some of the main reasons why individuals and/or community may be reluctant to take part in community participation:

- An unfair distribution of work or benefits amongst members of the community
- A highly individualistic society where there is little or no sense of community
- The feeling that the government or agency should provide the facilities
- Agency treatment of community members – if people are treated as being helpless they are more likely to act as if they are

Generally, people are ready and willing to participate; the biggest disincentive to this is probably the attitude and actions of the agency concerned. Treating people with respect, listening to them and learning from them will go a long way toward building a successful programme; it will also save time and resources in the long run and contribute greatly to programme sustainability. Fieldworkers who expect members of the affected community to be grateful for their presence without recognising and empathising with them as people may satisfy their own egos but will have little other positive effect.

Community participation can contribute greatly to the effectiveness and efficiency of a programme; the crucial factor in its success is the attitude of agency staff in the field.
If staff do not treat people with respect or are seen to favour particular individuals or groups within a community, this can have a highly destructive effect on participation. For this reason it is important to identify key representatives and groups within the affected population early.

12.2 Stakeholder analysis

It may not be possible for each and every member of the affected population to contribute to a programme equally but attempts can be made to identify key groups and individuals that can be actively involved. A useful tool to assess whom the programme will affect (positively or negatively) and therefore who should have a stake in the programme is stakeholder analysis. This should be used to identify key stakeholders and their interests. Stakeholders may include different people from within the affected population, as well as local authorities and agencies.

Table 12.1 shows an example of a stakeholder analysis for a refugee camp. Stakeholders are divided into primary (from within the affected community), secondary (local authorities, agencies, etc.) and external (other interested parties).

The likely effect or impact of the programme on each stakeholder is indicated as either positive or negative. The influence of these stakeholders over the current project is ranked between 1 and 6; 1 for maximum influence and 6 for minimum influence. The importance of each stakeholder for programme success is also ranked between 1 and 6, 1 being most important. This ranking can be done by a group of agency staff at the onset of an emergency programme, or by a group of different stakeholders, however the process should be as objective as possible.

This is only an example and numbers may vary considerably depending on the situation. The purpose of this tool is to identify all those on whom the programme will have an effect and assess the relative importance and influence of those groups or individuals. If, as in the above example, community members are of great importance but have little influence over the programme, community participation techniques can be used to overcome this and give these stakeholders greater say.

Table 12.1. Example stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders	*Interests at stake in relation to programme*	*Effect of programme on interests*	*Importance of stakeholder for programme success*	*Influence of stakeholder over programme*
Primary stakeholders				
Women	Improved access to sanitation facilities Better health	(+)	1	5
Children	Improved access to sanitation facilities Better health and safety	(+)	1	6
Disabled people	Improved access to sanitation facilities Better health	(+)	1	6
Men	Job opportunities Better health	(+)	1	4
Secondary stakeholders				
Civil/religious leader	Safeguard their influence within the affected population Mobilise the affected community	(+)/(-)	4	4
Elders	Respect and influence	(+)/(-)	3	3
Local authority	Maintain political power/control	(+)/(-)	2	6
NGOs in the affected area	Health and well-being of community	(+)/(-)	4	4
Local supplier	Sales and profits	(+)	2	6
Agency project team	Co-ordination of activities	(+)	2	2
External stakeholders				
Donor	Short-term disbursement of funds Effective and efficient delivery of programme	(-) (+)	2	2
Local population	Increased trade potential Disparity in service provision	(+) (-)	6	6

12.3 Gender and vulnerable groups

It is very important to make sure that minority groups, low status groups and poorer groups in a community are not left out and that women, men and children are specified in consultation processes.

12.3.1 Gender

Gender is based on sex but is more to do with socially constructed distinctions (work, dress, behaviour, expectations, etc.) than purely biological differences. Gender-related differences can be split into three categories.

- Differing needs and priorities
- Power and vulnerability differences
- Equity or equality issues (Smout et al., 2000)

Consideration of gender relates to men, women, boys and girls and their needs, priorities, vulnerabilities and strengths. Ultimately, consideration of gender issues benefits everyone. Since many donors focus on the vulnerabilities of the intended beneficiaries there often tends to be a focus on women in programme activities. This is because in most scenarios women have less influence than men, and it is for this reason that women's groups are often set up to provide a forum for women's views to contribute to programme design and implementation.

It is important to recognise, however, that gender does not automatically mean a bias towards women; the emphasis should be on the pursuit of equity of opportunity.

12.3.2 People with disabilities

People with physical and mental disabilitiese can often be overlooked in many emergency situations. They are among the most vulnerable in most societies and are often unable to present their own needs and priorities clearly. For this reason they should be given special attention where possible. This may include the construction of special sanitation facilities, assistance in community activities and the formation of focus groups for people with disabilities.

12.3.3 Elderly people

Elderly people may have specific needs which should be considered. For example, elderly people living without younger family members may be unable to participate in physical activities such as pit excavation or latrine construction. Such vulnerable households should be identified and solutions to their problems implemented.

12.4 Participation matrix

A participation matrix is a tool to identify how different stakeholders may be involved at different stages of a programme. The columns indicate who should be informed of activities and outputs; who should be consulted in conducting these activities; who should work in partnership to achieve the intended outputs; and who has ultimate control for each stage of the programme.

Table 12.2 gives an example for an emergency sanitation programme according to the Guidelines process.

Table 12.2. Example participation matrix

Type of participation / *Stage in programme*	*Inform*	*Consult*	*Partnership*	*Control*
Rapid assessment and priority setting		Agencystaff Authorities Community	Donor agency NGOs/UNHCR; Authorities	
Programme design		Community: leaders, focus groups, women's groups etc.	Agency; NGOs/UNHCR: Authorities; Community	Implementing agency
Implementation	Agency headquarters Donor	Agency staff Community	Agency NGOs/UNHCR Authorities Community	Implementing agency
Monitoring and evaluation	Agency headquarters Donor	Authorities UNHCR Community	Agency NGOs/UNHCR Authorities Community	Implementing agency Consultants

12.5 Community mobilisation

Community mobilisation applies to the way in which people can be encouraged and motivated to participate in programme activities. In order to mobilise a community successfully it is important to identify where people's priorities lie and what it is that motivates them. A useful starting point is to identify community leaders in order to establish key contacts between the agency and the community. Care must be taken in doing this to ensure that all community members are represented.

12.5.1 Motivation

Sanitation provision is not always a prioritised demand among disaster-affected communities. Other issues such as food, water and health care may present more obvious needs. This is often due to a lack of understanding of the links between sanitation and health. The importance of hygiene promotion in helping to raise levels of awareness and sensitivity can be a key aspect of engaging and mobilising communities.

It is important to remember that no community is completely homogeneous but is likely to be made up of people with a wide range of backgrounds and characteristics. Therefore what motivates one group of people within a community may not motivate others. Raising awareness about the public health aspects of sanitation may motivate some people to participate, whilst the opportunity to raise one's status or position in society may be a much stronger motivating force for other community members.

Motivation sources may not always be immediately obvious. Male Congolese refugees in Zambia became much keener to construct family latrines once they were made aware that their female family members might be in danger of being sexually assaulted or raped when practicing open defecation (Phiri, 2001).

12.5.2 Facilitation

Many participation activities in programme design are likely to take place in a group setting. Facilitation in the context of a group meeting applies to how a person with no decision-making authority helps the group to be more efficient and effective in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating (Svendsen et al., 1998). This is a difficult role to assume but is important if the community is to be given real decision-making power and responsibility. Professionals may need appropriate gender training or capacity building in participatory research and planning techniques in order to become effective facilitators.

12.5.3 Capacity building

Capacity building at community level may be important to develop skills and build confidence. This may be especially important for women who may lack experience of contributing to community planning. Capacity building through skills training and confidence building can be a key ingredient in motivating and mobilising different sections of a community.

12.6 Participatory appraisal techniques

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) are social research techniques used in the field when resources and time are often limited. These techniques require trained facilitators and substantial time investments if they are to be fully effective. The key differences between the two methods are that:

- RRA is a method used by outsiders to acquire information about a community quickly; and
- PRA is aimed at strengthening the analysing and decision-making power of the affected community.

RRA can be used by the implementing agency in assessment activities whilst PRA can be used in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The agency can facilitate the process but it is community members that learn to analyse their situation, design and implement programme activities. From this interaction process it is hoped that agency staff from outside the community may change their attitudes and behaviour. Four PRA activities are described briefly in the following sub-sections; these are usually carried out in small focus groups.

12.6.1 Mapping

Community mapping is a useful tool for collecting information from the community concerning the location of activities which may not be obvious from observation alone. This may also help to explain how the affected community views their situation and where they see opportunities or constraints. This method is most effective when used by a small group, working to produce a large sketch map of the area in which they live. The map produced may be crudely drawn and not to scale, but can still provide valuable information.

12.6.2 Ranking

Community members are asked to list their priorities in terms of their overall sanitation-related needs and their perceived needs for different sanitation facilities. The group facilitator should help to guide the group in considering what facilities or activities may be appropriate but ideas should come primarily from the participants. Table 12.3 shows an example ranking exercise for sanitation-related needs and priorities. The first priority is ranked 1, the second 2, and so on.

Table 12.3. Example ranking exercise

Priority needs	*Rank*	*Associated facilities/activities*	*Rank*
Preventing diarrhoea	4	Communal latrines Family latrines Handwashing	1 3 2
Clean environment	2	Solid waste pits Cleaning materials	2 1
Preventing malaria	3	Wastewater disposal Bed nets	2 1
Traditional funerals	1	Morgue Burial ground Coffins Concrete gravemarkers	4 1 2 3
Family facilities	5	Family latrines Family solid waste pits Cleaning materials Tools	4 3 1 2

This is a simple and rapid method for establishing what community members consider to be their primary needs. Priorities may differ greatly and this exercise may produce surprising results; in the example provided, people are much more concerned about funeral rites than they are about diarrhoea.

12.6.3 Diagramming

Diagrams, charts and cards may be used to illustrate relationships concerning people, resources or time. Examples include calendars of activities, charts of resource use or traditional leadership trees. For longer-term settlements, charts may be very useful for recording seasonal trends relating to hygiene behaviour and health, this may help in identifying and prioritising needs and actions. Shading or pictures may be used to indicate relevant months. An example is provided in Table 12.4.

Table 12.4. Example seasonal chart for health and hygiene

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Poor health												
Poor access to latrines, pits, etc.												
Poor drainage												
Large amount of waste												
Low availability of water												
Lack of building materials												

12.6.4 Discussions

The most common participative activity is discussion; this may take place in focus groups (women, community leaders, burial committee, etc.) or in more general meetings. The job of the facilitator is to focus and steer these discussions.

12.7 Problem-tree analysis

During the later stages of an emergency, communities may be actively involved in problem-tree analysis. This is an interactive process whereby the community members identify existing problems, formulate objectives and select appropriate actions. This can be conducted in group meetings involving all the key stakeholders.

12.7.1 Problem analysis

Before selecting specific actions, it is important that stakeholders identify and give their weighting to existing problems that need to be addressed, or potential problems that may affect the development of the programme. This may be achieved through a ranking exercise such as that described above. They can then develop these problems into objectives which can be used in action selection. It is suggested that this be done by the community planning team for each relevant sanitation sector individually.

Firstly, all stakeholders should be asked to identify what they consider to be the 'core' problem for that particular sector. This should be followed by discussion by the group to agree on a single core problem.

The team should then be asked to identify substantial and direct *causes* for the core problem and these should be placed on a diagram parallel to each other underneath the core problem. The substantial and direct *effects* of the core problem should then be identified and placed on the diagram parallel to each other above the core problem. A simplified example is illustrated in Figure 12.1.

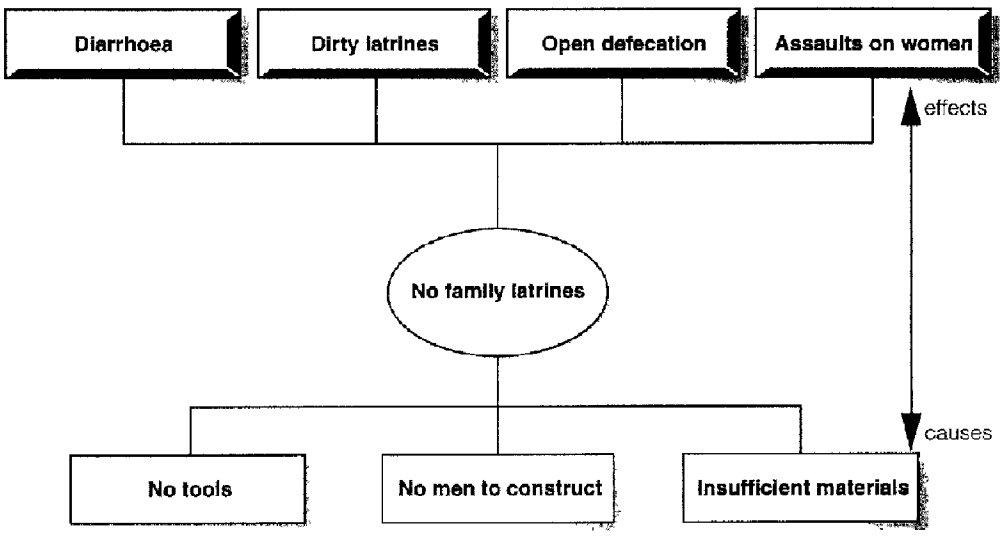

Figure 12.1. Problem tree analysis example

Causes and effects can then be further developed along the same principle so that multi-level casual links and branches are created.

12.7.2 Objectives analysis

The problem tree produced through the problem analysis process can be transformed into a hierarchy of objectives. This is done by rewording all the problems in the tree (including the core problem) and making them into objectives.

In this way, an objectives tree can be produced, in which cause–effect relationships have become means–end relationships. Figure 12.2 shows the expanded example.

12.7.3 Action selection

From the list of objectives key actions to satisfy these must be selected. The facilitator can help group participants by providing a range of options from which to choose and outlining the key advantages and constraints of each.

Using the above example community members would decide what type of family latrine to construct, what materials should be used, how tools and materials will be managed, and who will be responsible for construction.

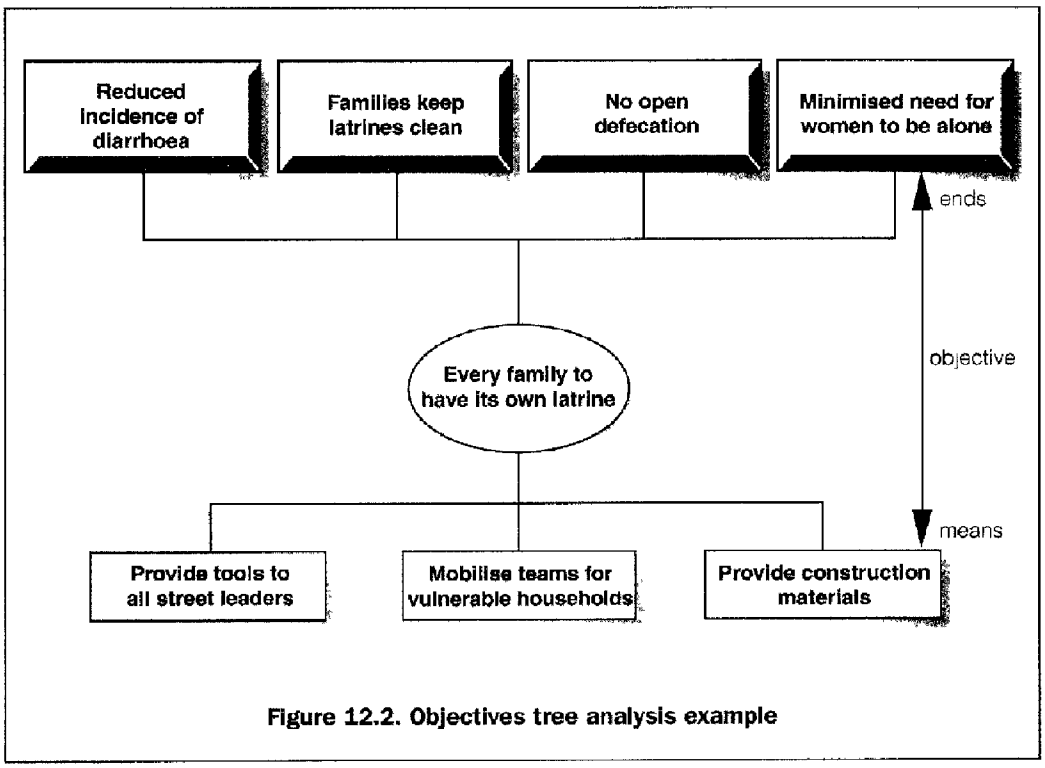

Figure 12.2. Objectives tree analysis example

12.8 Finance

In most externally-assisted emergency relief programmes there is no element of community-managed finance, yet that is not to say that communities cannot participate in the generation and management of finances. It is interesting to note that most emergencies worldwide have no external assistance at all and are therefore completely locally funded and managed. Where programmes are externally assisted, generally the implementing agency takes responsibility for procuring and managing funds and the community is neither expected to contribute nor have any direct involvement in how this money is spent. In the immediate stages of an emergency such an approach is probably the only option However, as emergency programmes evolve and become long-term, this arrangement can gradually change.

12.8.1 Finance generation

Community participation can also include finance generation activities and this may be a key starting point in giving communities greater responsibility, removing dependence on external support and promoting sustainability. In many emergency situations the affected community soon initiates some economic activity through trade and service provision. This may include setting up food markets, hairdressers or tailors, and the activities are built on existing skills and needs within the community.

By promoting such activity finance can be generated within the community which can lead to greater independence and allow people to contribute to programmes financially.

12.8.2 Cost recovery

Cost recovery is a key aspect of many development projects but is rarely applied in a relief setting. Once finance generation activities are set up within a community it may be possible to recover some programme costs from primary stakeholders. One simple example of how this can be done is to charge market stallholders a small levy which pays for the cost of managing the solid waste generated at the market. The monies collected can be used to pay workers and replace tools and facilities. Such a system can be managed wholly by the market workers themselves through the formation of a market committee and thereby removes continued reliance on the agency and gives the community greater autonomy. A similar system could be used to maintain communal latrines in the vicinity.

Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this book to address these issues in greater detail but appropriate references are given below.

References and further reading

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