

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution work stream

Agreed, practical definition of the meaning of “participation” within the context of this workstream

08 March 2017

There are a number of different terms in use by different stakeholders in relation to this area of work (e.g. accountability to affected persons, participation). **We believe, therefore, that an important first step for this workstream is to establish an agreed, practical definition of the meaning of “participation” within the context of this workstream which all stakeholders can use to guide programming in the field.**

[The Core Humanitarian Standard](#) describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action that puts affected people at its heart. It is an essential element of effective participation.

The Grand Bargain Participation Revolution workstream commitment document states:

We need to include the people affected by humanitarian crises and their communities in our decisions to be certain that the humanitarian response is relevant, timely, effective and efficient.

We need to provide accessible information, ensure that an effective process for participation and feedback is in place and that design and management decisions are responsive to the views of affected communities and people.

Donors and aid organisations should work to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable groups, considering gender, age, ethnicity, language and special needs are heard and acted upon. This will create an environment of greater trust, transparency and accountability.

We believe 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. This dialogue should take place through channels that beneficiaries prefer and with which they feel safe.

Such a dialogue includes the provision of information to affected communities about i) lifesaving information, including protection services, ii) humanitarian agencies’ activities and ways of working, and iii) opportunities, risks and threats. This should enable beneficiaries of assistance to make informed decisions for their survival and safety.

It should also include proactively and regularly seeking communities' perspectives and feedback on the humanitarian response and key aspects of humanitarian agencies' performance, including service quality and relevance and responsiveness to beneficiary concerns. This dialogue should entail understanding of communities' practices, capacities and coping strategies.

This ongoing dialogue is not just about exchanging information and learning. It is about managing the performance of humanitarian programming, and seeking to ensure effective action is taken in response to inputs received. It implies clear and consistent communication to inform people affected by crises what has been learned from them and how follow-up action will address their concerns, where this is feasible. To be effective this ongoing dialogue requires action by senior decision makers based on information received. Action may be required at an agency or country response level. Decisions made and action taken must be clearly and consistently communicated with affected population.