

# PART 3

## Sector Related Issues

### © Objective of Part 3

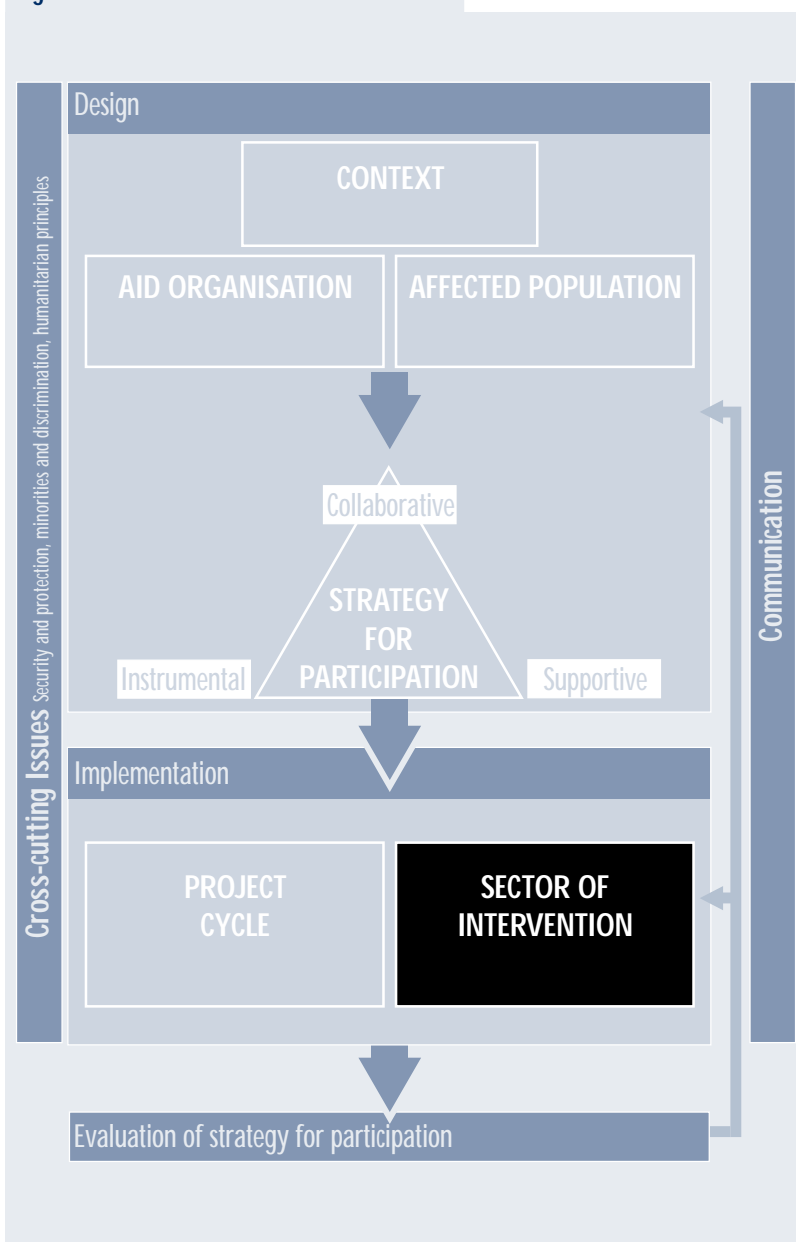
Part 3 places the generic information provided to date in the context of specific sectors that relate to humanitarian interventions. By the end of Part 3, you should have a concrete understanding of how to operationalise your participation strategy in particular sectors.

### 3

The idea of citizen participation is a bit like eating spinach.

In principle, nobody is against it, because it is supposed to be good for the health

*Sherry Arnstein, 1969*

**Figure 24** Sector-related issues

## CHAPTER 8

# PARTICIPATION AND FOOD SECURITY



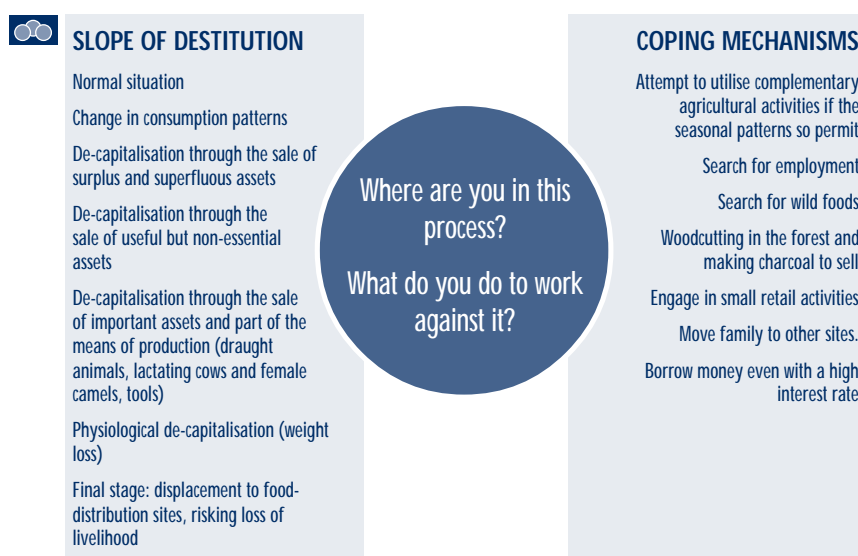
### REMINDER

In regard to all food-security interventions, it is important to consider the cross-cutting issues concerning **security and protection, minorities and impartiality and independence**. If planning to distribute food, for instance, you may find that people will refuse it, for fear of attracting looters. When targeting the most 'vulnerable' groups, you may find that they share their ration with non-targeted groups, which may reveal, for example, existing patronage relationships, patterns of indebtedness, or local social-security systems ('I give you when I have, you give me when you have'). It is important to be aware of such dynamics before engaging in programme implementation.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING COPING AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

In the food-security sector, in particular, it is vital to understand local practices and to appreciate local knowledge, notably the dynamics surrounding destitution and the way that the population tries to mitigate them via coping and survival strategies. **Understanding these practices and mechanisms is your first step**, regardless of the type of programme envisaged (food aid, nutrition or agricultural rehabilitation), since the objective is to pinpoint pertinent interventions for a given context. The analysis of coping strategies should allow you to identify the main problems and potential solutions.

This can be done through a series of exercises largely inspired by PRA techniques. A useful starting point may be to fill in and develop the following graph, using focus groups. It is useful to convene two kinds of focus groups, gender-specific and mixed groups, so as to compare the strategies of males and females.



The second step is to position these phenomena on a timeline, as presented below.

Understanding patterns of resilience and coping strategies is vital. The tool known as the 'pillars of survival' is very powerful in identifying and establishing a hierarchy of different strategies (see chapter 4, section 4.2).



### Exercise 18 Coping mechanisms timeline

#### Objective

The goal is to situate in time the progression between the various coping mechanisms put in place by the affected population.

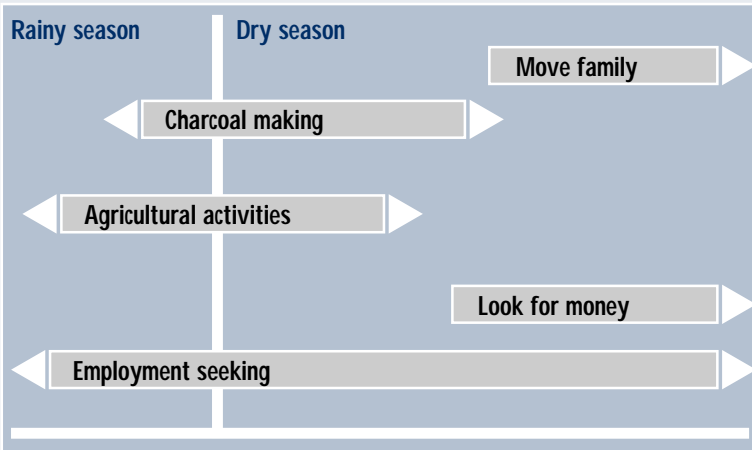
#### Participants

This can be done through focus groups, representative of the affected population as a whole, or disaggregated by gender, socio-economic status or ethnic group, if there are differences in their coping mechanisms. An initial timeline can be prepared earlier with key informants, to triangulate the information collected through focus groups.

**Step 1** Define the period to be covered with the participants (since the beginning of the crisis, for example). To do this, you can refer to the historical timeline and seasonal activity calendars if they have been elaborated beforehand (see chapter 3)

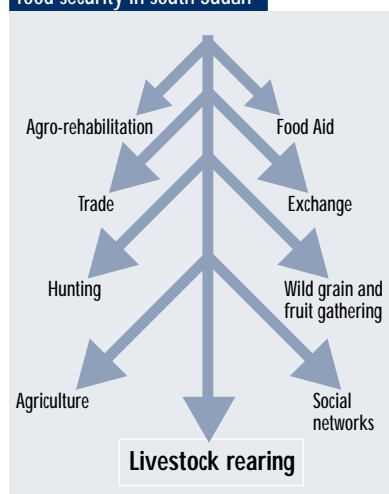
**Step 2** Place the various coping mechanisms of the participants on the timeline

**Step 3** Present the completed timeline to the participants, and open up the discussion. For instance: 'Have any coping mechanisms been omitted?' 'What will the main activities be in the forthcoming season?'





### The pillars of survival and food security in south Sudan



An example of the pillars of survival in the context of south Sudan is presented below. Livestock rearing is the basis of participants' livelihoods. Other strategies and coping mechanisms, by order of importance, include agriculture, support through social networks, hunting and wild grain and fruit gathering, trade, exchange, agricultural rehabilitation and, finally, food aid.

## 3

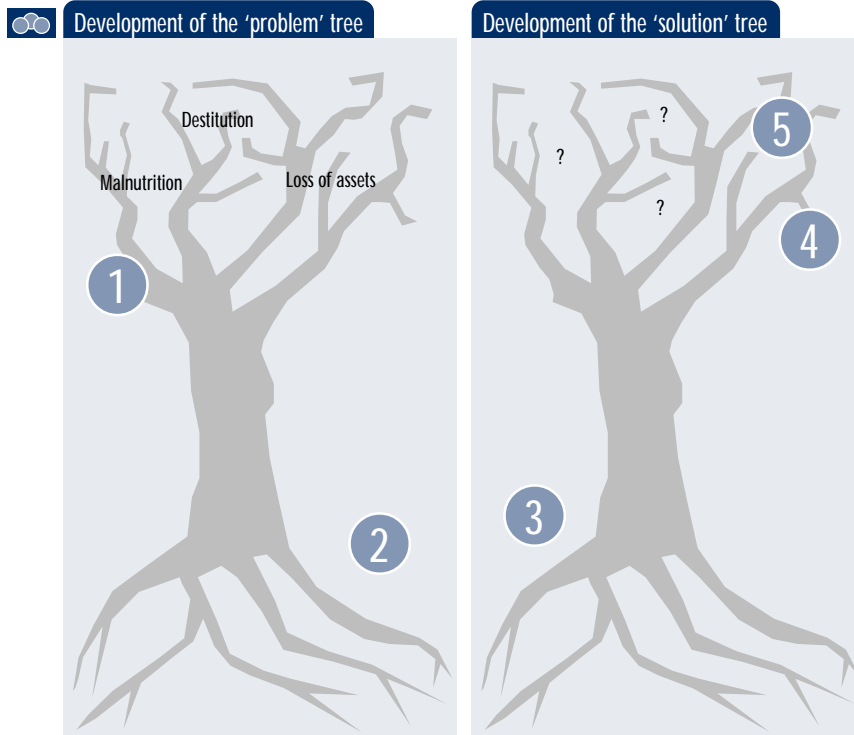
It is essential at this stage to establish a clear '**problem tree**' to inform the development of an appropriate '**solution tree**'. In relation to food security, the five phases of a participatory problem tree/solution tree focus-group exercise are as follows.

### Problem tree

- 1 Identify observable and recordable problems that result in food insecurity.
- 2 Identify direct and indirect causes.

### Solution tree

- 3 Restate clearly the causes of food insecurity.
- 4 Work out possible solutions to tackle the causes of food insecurity.
- 5 Assess the potential negative and positive impacts of possible solutions.



It is only after these exercises have been carried out that you can decide which type of intervention is most appropriate. Food-security interventions often consist of food aid, nutrition programmes and/or agricultural rehabilitation (as seen below), but this list is not exhaustive. Do not hesitate to be open to original suggestions from the affected population, or to look for interesting solutions in other intervention spheres.

## 8.2 PARTICIPATION IN FOOD-AID PROGRAMMES

It is generally considered that participation in emergency relief—the most common type being food-aid programmes—is not possible or is unnecessary. Participation is not common practice in a sector servicing large populations and for which all kinds of standards and protocols have been developed.

The potential benefits of engaging with the affected population largely support the need to be participatory in regard to food-aid programmes, even in 'emergency' situations: more relevant and culturally-appropriate choices of foods and target groups, enhanced time and cost-effectiveness and efficiency of distributions, and establishment of a relationship between the aid organisations and the population that is built on mutual respect and confidence. The latter is essential when other programmes are meant to follow or to complement the food distribution.

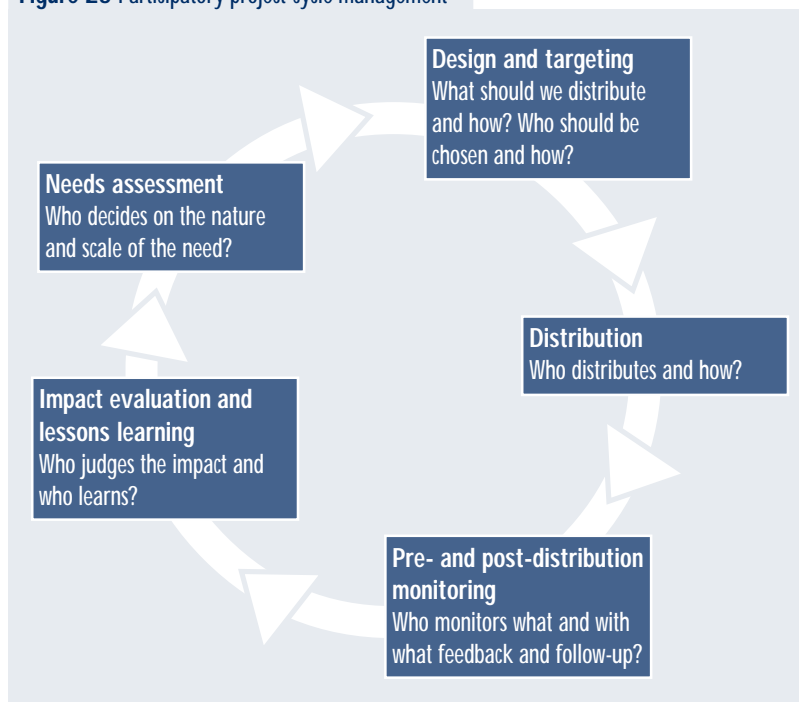
Meaningful participation is possible at all stage of the process.

3

- assessment;
- design (including targeting);
- distribution;
- monitoring; and
- evaluation.



Figure 25 Participatory project-cycle management



### 8.2.1 PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

Although the generic points concerning a participatory assessment were covered in chapter 3, a number of specific elements have to be included as part of a participatory assessment for a food-aid programme. These include:

- gender and age-group specificities in regard to food habits;
- adaptation of the ration in accordance with local habits;
- adaptation of the ration in accordance with available fuel and cooking instruments; and
- protection and security issues relating to food distribution.

Disaggregating information by **gender** is especially important; the organisation of focus groups should be particularly sensitive to gender.

For instance, in many countries, men and women do not eat together and women and children often eat only what remains from the men's meal. There are also specific issues relating to motherhood and child-feeding practices, during and after pregnancy, which cannot be discussed in the presence of men.

- ▶ In many societies, old ladies are excellent speakers on matters concerning women. As they have often been married, have grown-up children and have lived through many experiences, they sometimes dare to speak out in public meetings, where it may be inappropriate for women to do so. Make the most of their presence, and ensure that they are given the chance to speak. In addition, they often are very humorous. Their interventions are frequently memorable!

When it comes to identifying needs, several interesting participatory tools exist for qualifying, quantifying and allocating needs and resources. **Proportional piling** and **ranking** exercises (see chapter 3, section 3.2.3) are the two that are most appropriate to food-aid programmes, since they are easy to implement, even in remote and destitute areas with low literacy rates, and enable a degree of peer control. These exercises are particularly important for the targeting process (see below).

### 3

#### 8.2.2 PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

##### A Participatory targeting

As noted in chapter 3, targeting undertaken on the basis of your own views and criteria might lead to culturally and socially unacceptable practices. This is especially the case in clan-based societies, where inclusion in the social-security net is linked to individuals' ability to share when they have, so that they will receive when they do not.

Just outside the distribution sites situated close to the airstrip in **south Sudan**, it is common to see women lay out all that they have just received on nets or directly on the soil, and to share it with assisted and non-assisted

people from the affected population. Although there is no doubt that taxes are probably levied by the local institutions, the main reason for this phenomenon is the need for each woman to remain within the social-security net. 'You share when you have, so that the day you have nothing people will share with you'. Such is the rule of the 'survival game'. Failure to understand this fact, or to deny it, can be a source of considerable frustration, if not of security problems for aid agencies. It requires going back to the assessment and deepening one's comprehension of the social and cultural context.

Practical experience shows that it is often feasible to delegate to local structures responsibility for managing the targeting process and establishing lists of people to be assisted, for the implementation stage. While it can help to save time and to facilitate access and coverage, it also serves to increase the affected population's confidence in the aid organisation, and to ensure that undue tension is not created within the population due to inappropriate targeting.

In the community of La Loma de Bojayá (Colombia), one food-distribution exercise was conducted on the basis of an out-of-date census. Consequently, several vulnerable families (including elderly and handicapped people) did not receive aid. The community, via its representatives, complained to the organisation that was distributing the food, and refused to accept the rations. The community requested that a new census be carried out.

3

As food is a crucial item from the standpoint of both the aid actor and the affected population, the rationale behind the targeting process should be made clear through explanation and discussion with the main stakeholders.

The first step is to re-categorise the population according to the level of need, or to validate an existing typology. Questions to ask include the following.

- Who needs assistance the most?
- Who fits into a second tier among the affected population?

Proportional piling and ranking are the two main tools for participatory wealth ranking.



#### Ranking

Ranking is very useful to identify 'who needs assistance the most?' and 'what is needed?'

#### Proportional piling

Proportional piling can be used to allocate and prioritise distributions on the basis of the needs and quantities that have been identified as being required

It will be important to **triangulate** the results of these exercises, especially through focus groups with various sub-groups, to ensure that part of the affected population has not been excluded, and that the results reflect the reality of the situation. When doing so, it is essential to emphasise that you are consulting the population widely and to explain why, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

An important step in this process is pre-distribution monitoring, which can also be done in a participatory manner (see section 8.2.4).

### 3

#### B Organisation of the distribution

The design of the distribution in terms of content and organisation has been described at length in several manuals. These approaches are anything but participatory and are marked in most instances by suspicion of the affected population and local stakeholders. To engage in participation at this stage can seem challenging, but it is likely to be most rewarding in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the distribution process, and the establishment of a relationship with the affected population that is built on trust and respect.

#### 8.2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION

In many situations, especially in refugee camps or areas where the risks of manipulation and diversion are perceived as high, some aid organisations choose to engage in a totally non-participatory process.

**Table 19** The benefits of a participatory approach

Parameters	Benefits
<b>Ration content</b>	What kind of food? In what form? For what type of meal? For whose consumption? These are some of the key questions, even if the answers might challenge protocols on the nutritional composition of rations, and the constraints imposed by donors. A female focus group can shed considerable light on such issues and can help to ensure a more appropriate programme design, by introducing factors like cooking time and wood consumption.
<b>Distribution site</b>	The selection of a distribution site is guided by questions concerning accessibility, security and shade or shelter for recipients when queuing, and access to water. Often, sites are selected purely in relation to accessibility by truck or plane and crowd management. Site selection is seldom participatory, whereas a focus group can help you to identify the different options and to weigh up their comparative advantages and disadvantages, leading to a shared responsibility.
<b>Timing</b>	Time is usually a limited resource. People in crisis situations are generally concerned with ensuring the functioning of labour-intensive coping and survival mechanisms. The time constraint confronted by the affected population is not necessarily the same as that which aid actors face. Only a participatory process involving considerable dialogue can ensure that an appropriate compromise on the timing of the delivery is reached—one that takes into account the constraints faced by all stakeholders.
<b>Distribution modalities</b>	The humiliating act of queuing, mismanagement of lists, limited social-control mechanisms, and socially inappropriate methods of distribution will result in chaotic and bungled distributions. A proactive dialogue with organised focus groups can go a long way towards guiding the selection of appropriate distribution modalities.

People are simply called to the distribution point, sometimes with very little notice. Such approaches often generate a strong sense of defiance among members of the affected population, and can foster a desire to 'cheat the system'. Consequently, there is a need for more stringent controls. Unfortunately due to a lack of forward thinking sometimes quite distressing mechanisms have to be put in place, such as 'marking people with ink' and checking if the people queuing are female. One can well ask if the dignity of those assisted from the affected population is respected in such instances. This system is highly demanding in terms of labour and it can degenerate easily, since local authorities and structures are given little, if any, responsibility.

Yet, various agencies have tested many different mechanisms for participatory distribution. Three main approaches can be defined, depending on the level of participation envisaged, each having been proved to be cost-effective and relatively efficient.

■ **Approach 1 Practical involvement of the population** (instrumental)

Here, the population provides manpower to clean distribution sites, unload trucks and to transport food to nearby storage facilities, and it designates volunteers to participate in the distribution itself. Control has to be relatively strict. Immediate post-distribution monitoring is essential and should take place at the fence of the distribution site.

■ **Approach 2 Delegation of responsibility** (collaborative)  
Local institutions or structures manage the food-distribution process. This can ease distribution logistics, facilitate access to the population, and enhance social control.

**In Rwanda**, prior to the genocide of 1994, it was common practice to organise the distribution of food through the local administration and under the authority of the district administration. The Bami (traditional chiefs) were deeply involved in the process, to ensure that the population

was kept fully informed. The local administration had been trained in distribution-site management. Also, the villagers collected the food staple at a site where it was stored according to their living area (or hill), such that they would know where to go. Intimate knowledge of their neighbours' was a strong means of social control.

However, there are also some counter-indications to problems with this approach. For instance, when the society concerned is of an oppressive nature, the control of distribution by certain stakeholders will reinforce their power. Also, the risk of diversion can be increased.

In all of the Rwandan refugee camps in **Goma (former Zaire)**, *commune* heads actively participated in food distributions, preparing lists and assisting in the distribution itself. While this enabled the distributions to start very quickly, and required fewer agency staff, it also meant that distributions in large camps were chaotic, and more open to abuse by *commune* leaders, who could influence the size of the rations received by particular groups and potentially divert a proportion of the food for their own use.

Furthermore, 'given the context that produced the refugee exodus, i.e. the call for Hutus to "leave the country and continue the struggle from across the border"; the role of the militia in instigating and spreading the genocide; and the involvement in the militia of many *commune* and *prefecture* leaders, the use of *commune* leaders to distribute food was politically charged and potentially beneficial to the militia and those who had been involved in the genocide'.<sup>10</sup>

- **Approach 3 Support for a local initiative** (supportive)  
This type of approach is very rare, because, particularly in regard to distribution, organisations want or need (due to obligations to

---

<sup>10</sup> Borton, J., Brusset, E., Hallam, A. et al 'The international response to conflict and genocide: lessons from the Rwanda experience', Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, Copenhagen, 1996.

donors) to keep control of the process. However, examples have been found where local structures carried out the assessment, the design, and programme implementation. They only turned to an external organisation to provide the food and the other items to be dispersed. Although the food-providing organisation can be involved in the monitoring, implementation is largely conducted by the local structure.

In the days immediately after the Bojaya massacre, in Colombia—resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people and the displacement of some 7,000 others—community organisations carried out a census of the affected population, and a detailed assessment of its needs. They compiled all of the information and turned to various aid organisations to provide the various items required. The World Food Programme supplied the requested food, but community representatives managed implementation of the distribution.

### 3

The rationale behind choosing one or other of the methods presented above should relate to your stakeholder analysis (see the paragraph 'Who is who' in chapter 3.4). Questions you can ask yourself to guide your choice of approach include the following.

- Which local stakeholders could potentially take part in implementation of the distribution or could execute the process themselves?
- What is their capacity?
- What are their agendas?
- How does the population perceive them?


Sometimes, you might find yourself perplexed when the only solution is to go back to the situation analysis and to examine the potential of other distribution modalities.

- ▶ Below are some tips on how a distribution can be managed in a participatory manner.



- If you cannot delegate the distribution to a local actor, you can invite representatives of the population to oversee the distribution with you, which enhances your level of accountability to the population, supports information sharing, and can increase trust between you and the population.
- If you are delegating some tasks or supporting a local structure, you can create a committee composed of the various stakeholders participating in the implementation to manage, organise and oversee the distribution jointly.

You should be prepared to train the people you are working with in the various procedures involved in the distribution.

 And remember, the very least you must do is inform the affected population as widely as possible about how the distribution will occur and the rationale behind the procedures! Failure to do so can create tension within the population and between you and the stakeholders involved.

#### 8.2.4 MONITORING

Food-aid programmes are often difficult due to the inherent risk of diversion, inappropriate distribution, and misallocation of rations, for example. Monitoring before and after the distribution is, therefore, essential to maintain trust between the affected population and the aid organisation, and to avoid or manage tensions within the population.

Pre- and post-distribution monitoring can be done:

- by your agency (although not very participatory, accountability to donors often requires it);
- by your agency in collaboration with local actors and population representatives; or

- by the population itself, through social-control mechanisms. This implies that a high level of transparency has been achieved (see chapters 2 and 6).

Monitoring in a participatory manner can enhance the efficiency of the process and the level of reliability, strengthen local capacity, and support and maintain the trust that exists between your organisation and the affected population.

One way of managing a participatory monitoring process is to form a monitoring committee composed of representatives of the various stakeholders involved (including your organisation).

**In Colombia,** World Food Programme *observation committees*, comprising members of the population, monitor the food-distribution process, the list of those to be assisted from the affected population, product quality and the quantities dispersed, the level of equity in relation to the distribution process, product arrival dates, storage in centres, and the time and date of the distribution. This allows the WFP to reduce its inspection efforts and to strengthen its bonds with the community. Observation committee members call or correspond with the WFP frequently.

### 3

- ▲ Be careful to ensure that the monitoring process does not exclude 'voiceless' groups, but that giving them an opportunity to speak out and eventually complain does not put them at risk.


#### **A Participatory pre-distribution monitoring**

Pre-distribution monitoring consists of checking that those to be assisted on distribution lists correspond to the targeting criteria. This should be done whenever possible, since it is far easier to deal with errors and complaints before the distribution than during or after it!

Ways of verifying lists in a participatory way include the following.

- A team designated by the affected population carries out house-to-house verification.

- Display posters, publish lists, and make announcements at public meetings on the targeting criteria and the lists, so that people who meet the criteria but are not on the list can understand why they were not included. Develop a mechanism to collect queries/claims; it should be in place a few days/weeks before the distribution takes place.

 Be ready to manage claims and complaints, and allow time to do this before the distribution. As an external stakeholder, you may be in a position to act as a mediator if there are tensions between local stakeholders.

### **B Distribution and post-distribution monitoring**

Distribution and post-distribution monitoring is important to maintaining trust between the affected population and the organisation. Errors, misallocations and diversions, for instance, can result in tension and loss of trust, both within the population and between the population and the aid organisation.

Distribution and post-distribution exercises are very important to verify:

- the timeliness of the process;
- the quality of the information disseminated prior to the distribution;
- whether the process is fair;
- the presence or absence of distortion and unplanned food allocations (such as to the military and political actors); and
- whether there is a need for adjustments and the possible options for making such changes.


Different tools are available for this undertaking.

- A straightforward survey conducted at the gate of the distribution point (questions, checking bags, weighing goods) by

designated representatives of the population and members of the agency.

- Simple focus groups to gain feedback swiftly (here again, proportional piling and ranking exercises are very useful).
- House-to-house random surveys carried out by the same teams.
- More refined systems based on questionnaires.

Triangulating the information collected through various means is important to checking the reliability of the data.

 Be careful to ensure that the population representatives involved in the monitoring are in a position to be fair and impartial. Remember that members of the affected population with some control over distributed goods can be put under considerable pressure; as an external stakeholder, be ready to support them.

The results of the post-monitoring exercises should be fed back to the main stakeholders, particularly those who have participated in the process, to stimulate ideas and to find solutions. As a mark of accountability, results should also be shared with the population at large, to ensure that it sees the efforts being made to achieve a fair and appropriate process of food distribution.

3

### 8.2.5 EVALUATION

A participatory evaluation should consider both the impact of the distribution and of the process.

An evaluation of the **impact of food-aid programmes** aims to assess:

- the impact of the food ration on anthropometric indicators (such as malnutrition rates);
- the impact of the food ration on the diet; and
- the impact of the food ration on destitution processes.

It serves also to assess, *inter alia*, the possible negative effects on:


- the prices of local goods and foodstuffs;
- local activity calendars;
- population movement; and
- the conflict dynamics in the area (if this is a conflict situation).

In particular, it is important to evaluate the **impact on local markets**, which can be drastically influenced by the import and free distribution of large quantities of foodstuffs.

An evaluation of the **process** should cover issues like:

- appropriateness of the targeting criteria;
- coherence between the targeting criteria and actual aid recipients;
- content of the ration (type and quantity of items);
- information dissemination processes;
- management of claims and complaints; and
- level of participation in the various stages of the distribution.

Participatory evaluation of food-aid programmes can be done via an instrumental, collaborative or supportive approach (see chapter 7). Your choice will depend on the objective of the evaluation. If you plan to implement further programmes after the food distribution, it is particularly important to be participatory, as the evaluation can serve as a basis for future collaboration.

 Before choosing your approach, remember that food aid is an expensive commodity in an environment with few resources. Questions raised in relation to the management of distribution (such as equity, list distortion) or the effects, can quickly lead the evaluation team to address issues at stake. Before delegating to local actors, ensure that this exercise will not put them in danger.

▶ Various exercises and tools that can be useful in a participatory evaluation.

- **Sharing of Stories** for instance, 'how did the food distributed change my life that week?' and 'why I was not happy with the distribution process'.
- **Forming focus groups on impact** such as proportional piling on the way that family resources were used before and after the distribution; and work with timelines and activity calendars to measure timeliness.
- **Focus groups on the process** including ranking exercises on the appropriateness of the items contained in the ration, and the collection of ideas on how information was disseminated.

If a nutritional survey is planned to measure the impact on nutritional status, teams of women from the population can be mobilised to carry out a house-to-house information campaign, and, eventually, to identify and organise means for mothers to be involved in anthropometric measurements.

## 8.3 PARTICIPATION IN NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

Nutrition is at the heart of a family's life and culture. What foods are eaten, how they are prepared, and how they are shared between household members and neighbours, are part of a society's cultural heritage. Meanwhile, infant- and child-feeding practices are an intrinsic part of the mother-child bond. Dealing with nutritional issues, therefore, demands sensitivity and care, as well as trust and respect between families (particularly mothers) and aid workers.

Some nutritional techniques commonly used by humanitarian actors may, however, work against the building of trust. Anthropometric assessments, for example, are often rushed, whether held in large settings or in the home. They can be seen as an intrusion, especially when household members are not informed of the meaning and the purpose of the exercise. The targeting of feeding is carried out using quantitative indicators, such as the weight-to-height ratio, which may have little significance for mothers, and which may impose a level of discrimination between children that might be culturally inappropriate. Nutritional education sessions often involve large groups, with little interaction between mothers.

A few simple principles, ideas and examples are set out below to help you approach nutrition in a participatory manner.

### 8.3.1 PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

#### **A Who to work with**

Understanding the nutritional circumstances of crisis-affected households also means having knowledge of their **food security and health** situation (see chapters 8.1 and 11). This section will focus on nutrition as a feeding practice, household distribution of food and nutritional status, as measured by anthropometric indicators.

- ▶ The first stage of the participatory assessment is to **pinpoint the individuals or groups** that play a key role in feeding practices and nutrition, to **recognise their capacities**, and to **identify existing local initiatives** (such as community kitchens run by women's groups and nutritional education classes in schools). These individuals or groups can be mothers, mothers-in-law, women's groups, young girls, clinic staff or community health workers, heads of households, traditional healers, and even religious leaders, *inter alia*. They will be the main people to consult and work with in order to mobilise other community members throughout the project cycle. It is important to involve them from the outset.

Do not forget to be **sensitive in choosing agency staff** (international and national). They should be able to establish a relationship built on confidence with key community members. Since child and family nutrition is often in the hands of women, it may be more appropriate, in many instances, to work with female personnel, if possible, who have experience of childcare and are familiar with local food preparation and feeding practices.

### 3

#### **B Foods and feeding practices**

Among the main nutrition issues to address during a participatory assessment are:

- the types of food available and the foods used (including seasonal variations);
- beliefs concerning food and food preparation (such as hot/cold classification, therapeutic foods, famine foods, and views on breastfeeding), and motivations regarding certain feeding practices (religion and family dynamics, for instance);
- food-preparation methods;
- intra-household food distribution;
- infant feeding and weaning practices, and beliefs/attitudes related to them;



- constraints on feeding practices (food availability and birth spacing, for example); and
- changes in the above due to the crisis (if applicable).

The main way of gathering this information is through **focus groups**. When more private or intimate topics are addressed (like breastfeeding and infant feeding), it might be necessary to allow time for discussion to allow for confidence to be built.

**Direct observation** can serve to support discussions on the foods that are used and food-preparation techniques. This can be done through **market visits and home visits**, for example.



**Market visits** with informants can generate considerable information on food availability and can be a good way of engaging in lively and rich discussions. As you walk, an initially small group can develop into a large focus group, yielding a diverse range of information and ideas.

**Home visits** and observation of food preparation and mealtimes can serve to confirm information collected in discussions. They can also be a way of initiating a relationship between field workers and households.



**Proportional piling** can be used to identify the nutritional value of food in the diet, and to address other quantifiable issues; this is also a good way of triggering discussion. Different exercises can be conducted with different socio-economic or ethnic groups to compare diets and, after a crisis, to measure its impact on the diet.

Tables similar to the ones that follow can be used to organise collected information. Each of the columns corresponds to a topic for discussion with key informants and/or focus groups.

**Table 20** Family feeding practices before and after a crisis

	Foods available in household (purchased and produced)	Foods eaten (frequency)	Storage, preparation and hygiene	Eating order	Who is responsible for purchasing, storing and preparing food?
Before crisis					
After crisis					

This can also be done by season, or other factors that affect feeding practices.

**Table 21** Infant feeding practices

Age of children under 2 years	Breast feeding period	Weaning foods and age introduced	Preparation of weaning foods	Factors/beliefs affecting infant feeding	Care/feeding during illness	Remarks on mother–child relationship
Child 1						
Child 2						

3

Another useful exercise is to elaborate **daily schedules** of the main people involved in food collection and preparation, and child feeding (see chapter 3, section 3.2.4), as this helps in identifying constraints and opportunities, which can be acted on to improve the household's nutritional situation.

An effective way of collecting important information on feeding practices is to identify those who have more appropriate feeding practices and the factors that affect these practices in a beneficial way. These mothers can also play a key role in project design and implementation e.g. as counselling mothers (mothers promote and communicate with affected populations by giving information and training).

### C Anthropometric assessments

**Anthropometric assessments** (surveys carried out to obtain malnutrition rates, based on measurements of weight, height and the circumference of the mid upper arm) are typically highly 'non-participatory', with the affected population's involvement often limited to being weighed and measured. The meaning of these measurements and the purpose of the exercise can easily remain obscure to members of the population. Even if there is no participation, the involvement of the affected population is needed, at the very least:

- to ensure attendance—in the case of nutritional screenings (where mothers and children must come to the screening point and accept that they or their children are to be measured); and
- to ensure that survey teams are welcome in homes—in the case of home surveys.

When carrying out its fieldwork in Eastern DRC, the Global Study team faced resistance and defiance within certain Pygmy communities. It turned out that these communities had been surveyed in an anthropometric assessment months before, but they had not received any word from the organisation subsequently. Some population members complained that: 'This organisation has dared to come weigh and measure us, and they never gave us any food, and we have never seen them again'. Their trust in humanitarian organisations as a whole had thus been undermined.

The way the assessment is done, especially with regard to appraisals carried out before programmes are launched, can determine the type of relationship that is established between the population and the agency (trust/collaboration versus suspicion/disinterest). It is crucial, therefore, to explain the process and its objectives (see chapter 2). This can be done through, for example:

- meetings with local authorities, elders and key informants. (While this step is essential, and should occur first, it is generally

- not sufficient to ensure that all those with an interest in the assessment are informed); and
- meetings in public spaces (such as the market, church, mosque or water point).

When it is difficult for mothers to leave their homes (as in Muslim countries, for instance), arrangements can be made to visit houses in areas where the survey will take place.

Even if it is only possible to carry out a quick quantitative exercise, a nutritional survey also provides an opportunity to visit and talk with household members; when planning the assessment you should allow enough time to take advantage of this.

The interpretation of survey results can also be a topic for discussion in focus groups, at least between the teams and the people that have participated directly in it. Malnutrition rates can be used to provoke discussion ('why is this age group apparently more vulnerable to malnutrition than other age groups', for instance). It may bring to light certain elements that expatriate staff can overlook.

### 3

#### **Nutritional surveys in Afghanistan under the Taliban**

Carrying out household anthropometrical surveys in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime was difficult. Teams of Afghan and expatriate women, eager to finish a tiring exercise and tense because of restrictions imposed by the regime on the movement of women, rushed from house to house. They quickly undressed and measured (often crying) children and filled in structured questionnaires with little explanation or input from mothers. On some occasions, mothers refused to have their children measured.

These surveys could have been a unique opportunity to gain more qualitative observations and to engage in a dialogue with mothers at a time when accessing women was particularly difficult. This would have meant organising the survey differently and training the teams in matters besides anthropometrics.

### 8.3.2 DESIGN

Among the individuals/groups that you meet during the assessment phase, it might be helpful to identify those that are most likely to be actively involved in the later stages of the project, and/or to act as an intermediary between the population and the agency.

The methods used are common group planning techniques, including brainstorming in focus groups and collective elaboration of problem and solution trees.

Potential nutrition programmes are varied; for each, key questions should be raised collectively.

**Nutrition education** what type of messages should be transmitted? Who should disseminate them? And how (theatre, puppet shows, posters, for instance)?

**Vegetable/Kitchen gardens**<sup>11</sup> what should/can be cultivated? Where? By whom?

**Selective feeding programmes** (Supplementary Feeding Centre (SFC) or Therapeutic Feeding Centre (TFC)) although these programmes are usually based on the implementation of a set protocol, and are constrained by logistical issues and donor guidelines, it is also possible to involve actively those that are assisted or household members in their design, such as in relation to location (distance from various neighbourhoods or villages, for example), the type of centre ('wet' ration as opposed to 'dry' ration<sup>12</sup> in SFCs; day-care TFC or 24-hour

<sup>11</sup> A Vegetable/Kitchen garden is a small-scale garden where families produce a range of food, allowing for 'a little bit of everything' all year round rather than the reliance on a single harvest of one or two crops, primarily corn and beans).

<sup>12</sup> A 'wet' ration is a prepared meal that is eaten in a centre; a 'dry' ration is uncooked (often a porridge mixture) and is to be prepared and consumed at home.

TFC), and the content of the ration. Suggestions from the affected population can help to enhance the adaptation of the programme to local conditions and to take into account **security** and **access** issues.

When it is expected that members of the affected population will be involved in programme implementation (see the following section), it is important to consult them on the tasks that people can and/or are interested in performing.

Furthermore, the resources available for a feeding programme can be used to support or strengthen an existing local initiative (like a community kitchen or an orphan feeding project). The challenge is to collectively identify how your organisation's resources (food, logistics and expertise) can be used to support this.

### Using consultative research for nutrition programming: Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs)<sup>13</sup>

## 3

TIPs (also known as household trials) involve a series of visits to selected homes to test new behaviours aimed at improving child nutrition. This is done by discussing potential improved practices, negotiating specific changes, and following up to record the reactions of mothers and children to the new practices. Analysis of the results of TIPs includes summaries of common feeding problems, identification of the most acceptable recommendations, ways that mothers modify these recommendations, and motivations and constraints related to trying out these new behaviours. All of this information can be used to develop nutrition messages and your programme's communication strategy.

---

<sup>13</sup> Dickin, K., Griffiths, M. and Piwoz, E., Designing by Dialogue. Consultative Research for Improving Young Child Feeding. Prepared by The Manoff Group for SARA Project (USAID), Academy for Educational Development: Washington, D.C., 1997.

### 8.3.3 IMPLEMENTATION

There are a variety of ways to engage with mothers, others of those that are assisted and other interested individuals in regard to implementation of nutrition projects. These range from involvement in simple tasks (such as participation in the preparation of family meals in therapeutic feeding centres) to full delegation of activities, or providing support for existing nutrition programmes. At a minimum, the programmes should be organised in a way that facilitates exchanges and encourages respect between agency staff and the affected population (for instance, the arrangement of distribution, smaller groups in education sessions, and a staff schedule allowing for personal attention to the needs of the local population).

Several examples of programmes are presented below.

#### **Community development programme with comprehensive nutrition component in Congo-Brazzaville<sup>14</sup>**

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNICEF launched this initiative following the 1997–99 armed conflict, which had a severe psychological and physical impact on the population. The nutritional component included child health and growth promotion, micronutrient supplementation, de-worming, rehabilitation of malnourished children, and the management of child illness. The programme was implemented through elected Local Development Committees (LDCs) and Community Outreach Workers (COWs). They were trained in trauma counselling, basic health and nutrition, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and in identifying solutions. Also, mothers with positive-deviance behaviours were used as models in developing nutritious recipes using locally available foods and drawing on health education messages. After a year, an evaluation showed that mothers' knowledge of nutrition and health had improved. Practices had also improved, although not as much as expected.

---

<sup>14</sup> Tchibindat F, Mouyokani, I. and Ba, M., Community empowerment after armed conflict: a case study from Congo-Brazzaville, (UNICEF)

During focus groups, mothers explained that they lacked the money to buy nutritious foods and requested that income-generating activities be initiated to fill the gap. In some areas, COWs launched a community-savings initiative to aid poorer households. Malnutrition rates fell, in line with the general trend across the country, although the improvement was greatest in intervention sectors. Community assessments identified other needs (such as water, road rehabilitation, education, and mosquito control) that were beyond UNICEF's mandate and capacity, but that could be addressed by other bodies serving as part of a multi-agency taskforce.

### Home treatment of severe acute malnutrition in Sierra Leone

The standard treatment of severe malnutrition in TFCs—where patients stay for one to two months with their carer (usually the mother)—entails considerable opportunity costs for families. The longer a carer spends in the centre, the less time he/she has to tend to other children and to participate in the economic activities of the household. This is one reason why several agencies are investigating the possibility of treating severe malnutrition at home.

Action Contre la Faim began with a clinical trial to evaluate the new approach in Sierra Leone. After spending the initial treatment phase in the centre, patients who satisfy certain health and nutrition criteria are sent home. The mother is then responsible for feeding the child with therapeutic foods that she has been trained to prepare and use in the centre. Patients have weekly nutritional and medical check-ups.

The results of the trial in Sierra Leone were extremely positive, not only at a technical level (weight gains and recovery rates experienced by patients were equivalent to those witnessed in the TFCs), but also in terms of the sense of satisfaction and self-fulfilment enjoyed by mothers. The latter could reintegrate into the household sooner and felt a tremendous sense of pride at their ability to cure their child by themselves. It helped to reduce feelings of fatalism with regard to child illness and increased the motivation of mothers to provide their children with better nutrition and healthcare.



The agency showed that health education and community involvement were as important to the success of the new strategy as the nutritional products used and the initial medical treatment offered to the children.

#### 8.3.4 MONITORING

Nutrition programmes are often monitored using quantitative indicators, such as weight gain, malnutrition rates, admission/discharge levels, and the number of education sessions. Although these are important in relation to monitoring the technical effectiveness of the programmes, they often omit the perspectives of those that are being assisted. However, poor quantitative results may not be due to inadequate technical implementation, but to a lack of relevance and compatibility in terms of programmes that meet the local population's concerns or habits. Quantitative monitoring should thus be complemented with qualitative information regarding the satisfaction, complaints and suggestions, *inter alia*, of those that are assisted and other members of the affected population. This can be done through focus groups, informal interviews and visits.

#### 8.3.5 EVALUATION

The evaluation should cover issues concerning impact and process.

Nutrition programmes aim to reduce malnutrition (chronic or acute) by preventing or treating it. Consequently, impact should ideally be measured in terms of a fall in the rates of malnutrition (although it is often difficult to attribute any change to an intervention, given the large number of factors that affect malnutrition).

Furthermore, for some types of programmes, particularly nutritional education programmes, it is difficult to measure impact in terms of malnutrition. Qualitative changes, such as behavioural change and increased knowledge, are the main quantifiable impact (how they are measured needs to be established during the design phase).

Focus groups with people from the affected population, which analyse how the programme has affected them, are a good way of collecting qualitative information on the effect of the programme. The impact in terms of local population satisfaction/dissatisfaction should not be omitted.

The level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the affected population and its recommendations regarding the programme process (information sharing, participation, and implementation of people's suggestions, for example) are also vital, since feedback is key to evaluating the process and to improving future interventions.

**Reminder**

Here again, the importance of explaining (through proper feedback) what will be done with the information that has been collected during the monitoring and evaluation sessions must be reiterated, especially when the methods used to collect the data (like anthropometric measurements) may seem alien to the affected population.

## 3

## 8.4 PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION

Farmers have been cultivating their land for centuries. They know their area, soil quality, water availability and cultivation techniques. They have seen agricultural programmes that have worked, and those that have not. Their experience, and, therefore, their participation, is crucial to the success of agricultural rehabilitation programmes. Furthermore, the objective of such programmes is to lay the foundations for agricultural recovery in the long-term. As such, programme ownership by the affected population is essential.

The influence of Participatory Rural Appraisal is probably strongest in this sector, since PRA techniques emerged mainly out of rural development debates. But experience shows that participatory

approaches are also very useful and rewarding in regard to emergency or post-crisis agricultural rehabilitation, where they can be employed throughout the project cycle.

#### 8.4.1 ASSESSMENT

Key elements concerning approaches to participatory assessments have already been outlined in chapter 3. A few methodological issues can, however, be added to this list of factors, specifically in relation to agricultural rehabilitation, so as to fine-tune your approach to participatory assessment.

- Traditional names should be used when talking about agro-ecological and bio-climatic conditions.
- Agro-ecological and bio-climatic conditions should be linked to agro-pastoral calendars.
- Agricultural practices by gender and age-group should be clarified, as well as cropping patterns, in order to ascertain peaks of labour.
- Land tenure and social mechanisms related to access to land, water and money should be analysed collectively.
- Traditional seed systems should be identified collectively and their strengths and weaknesses clearly established.
- Local understanding of hazards and risks and existing adaptive mechanisms should be identified and understood.
- Possible interaction with other programmes, such as food distribution, must be considered and appraised.

It is particularly important to disaggregate information by gender, as the distribution of agricultural tasks and responsibilities between men and women can be a very important factor. Your organisation of focus groups should be highly sensitive to gender.



### Gender specific activity calendar

The division of labour in the field, as well as the control of resources, is, in most cases, very different between women and men, but it is subject to many variations depending on the society (matrilineal or patrilineal, and Muslim or Buddhist, for instance). Establishing a **gender-specific activity calendar** is, therefore, very important.

Month		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Activities													
Crop 1	Men												
	Women												
Crop 2	Men												
	Women												
Livestock	Men												
	Women												
Market	Men												
	Women												
Wood collection	Men												
	Women												

3



To complement this calendar, a **focus group** to determine (for each crop) who manages the seeds, the harvest, the stocks and the money can be extremely useful.

**Proportional piling** and **ranking exercises** are, again, very powerful tools in both qualitative and quantitative analysis of needs in poor, neglected crisis-affected farming communities.



**Proportional piling** can help in quantifying the losses resulting from the disaster, area by area, and item by item.

**Participatory ranking** is a very powerful tool in identifying priorities and establishing a hierarchy of the various factors affecting production.

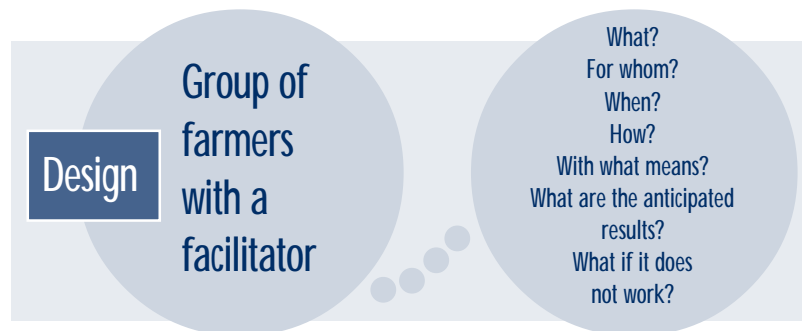
### 8.4.2 DESIGN

#### A Technical design

Farmers are usually not passive aid recipients; first and foremost, they are active stakeholders. To include a group of farmers in the process of defining an intervention is, in most instances, a useful exercise.

Another important element is to ensure that the suggested **programme is compatible with farmers' strategies and knowledge**. As there are also risks of error and scope for interpretation, involving farmers in the technical design of the programme is a wise way of **sharing responsibility**.

Several issues are at stake and should be clarified through focus groups.



A major benefit of participatory design is that it ensures that existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences can be taken into account.



It also ensures that the operational choice makes sense. There are usually several options to choose from: distribution of seeds; multiplication of seeds; distribution of tools; support for blacksmiths making the tools; veterinary care; restocking; irrigation; development of watering points. What kind of participatory process can be employed to choose between the available options?

Once a strategy is chosen, a more detailed participatory design process can begin.



**Figure 26** The design of the content of a seed distribution programme

The first part of the participatory process is to fill in the first column. This is done after an initial group exercise involving transect walks, mapping and group discussion. The second column should be completed during a plenary session, following a presentation of the drawn up transect walk, the mapping, and an agricultural calendar.

Diversity of the agricultural landscape	Diversity of the seed packets to be distributed
<b>Zone A</b> Higher land with major slopes, resulting in quick drainage. Cold is a constraint that shortens the growing season	The seed package should include drought- and cold-resistant crops. It should be distributed in a timely fashion, since room for manoeuvre is limited
<b>Zone B</b> Lower lands with swamps and irrigation potential. Soils are very heavy	The seed package should include flood-resistant crops and those suited to irrigation
<b>Zone C</b> Intermediary hills, with rocky terrain and sandy soils. Good drainage, but very hot conditions	The seed package should include drought-resistant crops, capable of tolerating relatively unfertile soil

3

- ▶ A very useful exercise at this stage is to **prepare a logical framework** for your proposed activity with the affected population or group of farmers that you are engaged with. Highly **informative local indicators** can be identified when elaborating a logical framework in a participatory way.

### **B Targeting**

A particular element of the participatory targeting process, in the context of agricultural rehabilitation programmes, is that it should help to identify people who are skilled in using the means of production (like seeds and tools).

- Does that mean that only people with guaranteed access to land can be targeted?
- What should be done to assist the others?
- Could granting landless people access to the means of production become a useful way for them to negotiate access to land?
- Are we generating additional jealousy and a new source of inequity?



#### Focus group on who should receive assistance

Very poor farmers? But they are often landless and do not have access to other means of production, such as draught animals and ploughshares.

Middle class farmers? In most instances, they will produce only to meet their needs.

Rich farmers? They will most likely produce a surplus, which they will sell and become richer.

If we give to the last group, what will be the benefit to other groups?

3

In order to respond correctly to these questions, the targeting exercise should be collective, transparent and participatory. Once a strategy has been identified, discussed and agreed with the group that you are engaged with, it should be shared with other stakeholders in order to ascertain their views and, eventually, to garner their support. In addition, a proper information campaign should be launched.

Several points should be taken into account in the targeting exercise, including land and access to resources.



#### Brainstorming on land availability

Issues related to land availability, land rights, and the possibility and means of accessing land are often very important, but extremely sensitive.

Controlling access to land is a source of power, but also a matter loaded with cultural symbols, which should be approached with care. A series of steps, ranging from interviews with key informants to focus groups on land rights, can be useful in gathering information and maintaining transparency.

'I need to understand and we need to map out this issue in order to identify collectively the problems associated with, and the solutions to, the following question: whom shall we distribute the means of production to?' This is how the issue could be presented at the start of the session.

When targeting criteria have been agreed, local actors (including local authorities, local NGOs and local farmer organisations) can be entrusted with the actual process of **establishing lists**. Various control **mechanisms** will need either to be activated or supported. This can be done:

- by the agency (although not very participatory, accountability to donors sometimes necessitates it);
- by the agency in collaboration with local actors and representatives of the population; or
- by the population, utilising social-control mechanisms. This implies that a high level of transparency has been achieved (see chapter 2).

### 8.4.3 IMPLEMENTATION

When the assistance programme is based on the distribution of agricultural inputs, the existing participation mechanisms (mentioned in chapter 4) can be applied.

The participatory process becomes more complicated when the programmes go beyond input distribution. Many participatory tools employed in the development sphere can be applied in such cases. Yet, due to the constraints related to crisis environments (concerning access



and security, for instance), these development-oriented participatory methods often need to be adapted and contextualised.

#### **Veterinary programme (Somalia, 1993)**

This programme was set up to stimulate the livestock sector in a pastoral economy affected by a deadly inter- and intra-clan conflict. As livestock is a central element of Somali culture, it was very easy to gain people's support, to engage them without great difficulty in cost-recovery schemes, and to set up a process via which community representatives could be designated for training as para-veterinarians.

#### **Seed multiplication programme (Rwanda 1995)**

In Rwanda, immediately following the conflict, it was very difficult to find quality seeds. It thus became essential to stimulate the existing traditional seed sector and to re-initiate production of quality seeds for certain crops. In this case, cooperatives and farmers' associations were the main partners—they had played a very important role before the genocide. Where their leaders were still alive and had not been involved in the massacre, these local entities played an extremely important part in the implementation of the seed programme.

3

### **8.4.4 MONITORING**

#### **A Pre-distribution monitoring**

Pre-distribution monitoring might be necessary to crosscheck the list of those assisted from the affected population. Here, again, it can be done by the agency alone or it can be carried out in a participatory manner. The key issue is how to deal with possible claims. The participatory nature of the process normally ensures that the community can take responsibility for, and play its part in, solving problems that arise from targeting and responding to complaints related to the list.

▶ In certain areas, it is possible to visit people from the affected population's fields with a team of designated local people and representatives of the village elders, prior to the distribution of agricultural inputs. This is useful for:

- settling disagreements;
- clarifying the rationale behind the targeting; and
- preparing the ground for an impact evaluation at harvest time.

### **B Post-distribution monitoring**

Although post-distribution monitoring is of great importance in programmes that involve the large-scale distribution of agricultural inputs, it can also have relevance to other, less conventional, activities. It should help to identify gaps and problems, as well as the counter-measures that might be required.

Particularly important is the collection of information on:

3

- the timeliness of the process;
- the quality of the information disseminated prior to the distribution;
- the fairness of the process;
- the presence or absence of distortion and unplanned allocation of production means; and
- initial indicators highlighting members of the affected population's satisfaction.

As it is often the first place where lessons are learned, it is vital to ensure that this collective exercise can also lead to participatory decisions on possible or necessary programme amendments.



Different tools are available to the aid community at this juncture:

- a simple survey at the 'gate' of the distribution point;

- simple focus group to provide quick feedback (here, proportional-piling and ranking exercises are very useful); and
- more refined systems based on questionnaires.

In a participatory post-monitoring process, results should be fed back to the main stakeholders, particularly those involved in the monitoring, to help ensure the responsibility of all, to stimulate the production of ideas and to find solutions. They should also, as a mark of accountability, be shared with the wider population, so that it sees that efforts are being made to improve the system, to listen to possible complaints and to ensure transparency in the process.

In a seed-distribution programme, two different seed-type kits were mistakenly inverted: the seed kit for the low land was packed in plastic bags marked high land. The participatory post-distribution survey immediately identified the problem and an emergency process was organised to collect the wrong seeds and to dispatch the right ones, before people started planting them. People were happy to see how cautious the agency was, and a lot of farmers got involved in the recollection process without any financial incentive. Had this error not been identified quickly through post-distribution monitoring, its impact would have been dramatic.

3

#### 8.4.5 EVALUATION

Evaluation of the impact of agro-rehabilitation programmes should, in theory, reveal their affect on the diet and the family economy, as well as on destitution or recapitalisation processes.

Field visits to cultivated plots, irrigation schemes, blacksmiths' workshops, and to corrals where herds are kept, for example, are the first, yet essential, part of a participatory evaluation process. The field is where one can directly observe the impact, measured with indicators defined earlier in the process. It is important to delineate at the field level the references (such as the size of the straw, the number of grains

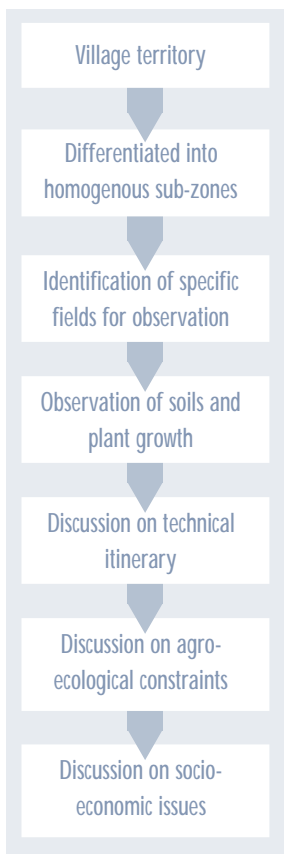
and the colour of the fruit) that will be used to observe a given phenomenon.



One of the most useful participatory exercises is that which leads, through several focus groups, to the elaboration of a **matrix of positive and negative effects**.

**Table 22** Evaluating positive and negative effects of agricultural rehabilitation programmes

Distribution of agricultural inputs	Seed multiplication schemes	Veterinary programmes	Tool production
<b>Positive impacts</b>			
Impact on the area cultivated	Impact on the area cultivated	Impact on animal health	Impact on the availability of tools
Impact on the yield harvested	Impact on the yield harvested	Impact on the herd size	Impact on the economy of craftsmen
Contribution of the food produced to the diet and family budget	Contribution of the seed produced to local seed security	Impact on the cereal–livestock price ratio	
<b>Negative impacts</b>			
Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs	Prices of local goods and foodstuffs
Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars	Local activity calendars
Population movements	Population movements	Population movements	Population movements
Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area	Conflict dynamics in the area



The field visit should adopt 'zoom in/zoom out' logic, to analyse the impact of the action at various levels.

There are many ways to evaluate impact:

- field surveys with groups of farmers (left);
- market surveys with groups of women;
- granary surveys with village representatives.

The objective is to reach a shared understanding of the programme's impact on the quantity of produce in the market and on related prices.

- Who are the main actors in the market and how does it function?
- What basic food staples are available in the market at the time of the survey?
- What are the seasonal variations in crops, quantities and prices?
- What other essential goods are available?
- What is the impact of the aid programme on the availability of different items in local markets?
- What is the impact of the aid programmes on prices and accessibility?

3

The objective is to achieve a shared understanding of the impact of the programme on food stocks and seed reserves.

- What are the normal storing mechanisms (family-, community- or individual-based)?
- What are the normal storage techniques (house, granary or warehouse, in bulk, in bags)?
- Who is in charge of the granary system (men, women, elderly people, the village council)?
- Are there known post-harvest factors (what are they, how detrimental are they)?
- Are there known post-harvest loss-reduction systems (how do they work, who is in charge, at what cost)?
- Is there interest in working in this sector (with whom, under what conditions)?