

**Dissertation**

**Master of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Action**

Academic Year 2015-2016

**Participation of people affected by conflict in humanitarian action:  
Between theory and practice  
Case study: "Al-Busira" project - Syria**

Submitted by

**Batoul Kazwini**

Examining Board:

Supervisor: **Mr Bonaventure Gbétoho Sokpoh**

President of the Board: **Prof. Gilles Carbonnier**

Expert: **Mrs. Karla Levy Simancas De Marichales, ICRC**

**August 2016**

CERAH  
a Joint Centre of

THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE | GENEVA  
INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES  
INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT  
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL  
AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE

## **Abstract:**

Participation, a concept inspired from the development world, continues to challenge humanitarian actors in understanding and practice. The need for fast responses which is the main character of the humanitarian action made actors doubt the possibility of doing high leveled participation during their fast and mostly short term interventions. Humanitarian actors finally agreed on the importance and the possibility of engaging with communities in humanitarian projects even in conflict situations which is normally more challenging, however, practice still shows a need for more progress.

Guidelines and donors' declarations are pushing toward more effective involvement with affected communities to achieve higher quality and transparency. Yet, lower levels of participation, mostly the consultative and the functional forms are still the most dominant in humanitarian projects.

A review of literature about the definition of participation, its typologies and levels was done as an attempt to capture an understanding of the concept. Then to compare with the practice, a case study of a participatory project done with IDPs in a conflict area was presented. The study tried to give a voice to the affected population who participated in the project, aiming to compare their views with the opinions of project implementers.

Opinions of implementers and community members matched in some points (the role of community as source of information during assessments and their functional role during implementation) and did not in others (information sharing and community initiatives as levels of participation). However, in general both - community and implementers - had a limited understanding and involvement in the decision making process, by linking it only with the consultation during diagnosis stage.

In brief, this research confirms the idea that a more comprehensive understanding and practice of higher levels of participation is still needed in humanitarian aid projects.

**Key words:** participation; pretty's typology; community engagement; involvement; participation in humanitarian aid; conflict affected people; IDPs.

## **Abbreviations and acronyms:**

**ALNAP** The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance

**CAAP** Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations

**CHS** Core Humanitarian standards on Quality and Accountability

**DAC** Development Assistance Committee

**DFID** The Department for International Development – GOV.UK

**EU** European Union

**GHD** Good Humanitarian Donorship

**HAP** Humanitarian Accountability Partnership

**IASC** The Inter-Agency Standing Committee

**ICRC** The International Committee of the Red Cross

**IDPs** Internal Displaced People

**IMC** International Medical Corps

**M&E** Monitoring and Evaluation

**NFI** Non-Food Items

**NGOs** Non-Governmental Organizations

**OCHA** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**OECD** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OED** Oxford English Dictionary

**PRA** Participatory Rural Appraisal

**RRA** Rapid Rural Appraisal

**SDC** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

**SIDA** Swedish International Development Cooperation

**UK** United Kingdom

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

**UNICEF** The United Nations Children's Fund

**URD** Urgence Réhabilitation Développement

**USA** United States of America

**USAID** U. S Agency for International Development

**WASH** Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Promotion

## Acknowledgements:

I would like to start by thanking Mr. Bonaventure G. Sokpoh, from Groupe URD for his continuous support, this research could not be completed without his guidance and productive criticism.

I am also grateful for all CERAH professors and staff that gave me the knowledge I have now in the humanitarian field and pushed me toward more critical thinking.

A special thanks to Dr. Edith Favoreu, who thanks to her, I always ask myself: “so what?”

I cannot forget as well all my classmates at CERAH who shared with me their experiences and gave me all the support needed to complete my masters. With you I felt like I am home for a while in Geneva, so thank you all.

On a professional level, I could not be able to start my path in the humanitarian field without your trust, Shelia Ramaswamy, thank you for believing in me and guiding my steps in the humanitarian world.

A special gratitude to the team of IMC in Tartous who without them the voices of community would not have been heard and for the representatives of the organizations who accepted to share their precious opinion in this research.

On a personal level, I dedicate this modest research for my parents and brothers, without you my family nothing could be done.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction:	1
2. Methodology and limitation:	3
3. Litterateur review:	4
3.1. Participation definitions:	4
3.2. Participation typologies:	5
3.3. Guidelines in the humanitarian aid:	10
3.4. Donors and participation:	12
3.5. Why participation?	13
3.6. Participation: How and When?	15
4. Case study:	16
4.1. Overview of the context:	16
4.2. Overview of the Organization:	17
4.3. The Project – Waste Management Campaign:	18
4.3.1. Assessment:	18
4.3.2. Implementation:	18
4.3.3. End line survey:	19
4.4. Discussion: comparing the view of implementers with the perception of participants:	19
4.4.1. Participation in practice: How and when?	19
4.4.2. Decision making process:	20
4.4.3. Impressions about the involvement:	21
4.4.4. Challenges and recommendations:	22
4.5. Analysis – IMC project:	22
4.6. Recommendations:	23
5. Other points of view:	24
5.1. ICRC point of view:	24
5.1.1. Analysis – ICRC:	25
5.2. Local organization point of view:	26
5.2.1. Analysis – Local organization:	26
6. Participation: feasibility and constraints:	27
7. Conclusion:	28
8. Annexes:	30
8.1. Annex 1: Pretty’s typology of Participation:	30

8.2. Annex 2: FGD questionnaires:.....	31
8.3. Annex 3: IMC – implementers’ survey: .....	32
8.4. Annex 4: Other organizations – survey: .....	34
9. Bibliography .....	36

## 1. Introduction:

In one of the rare books that captures the opinions of the affected community “*Time to listen*”, one of the phrases heard repeatedly from community was, “*International aid is a good thing, and we are grateful for it ... but ....*” (Anderson, Brown, and Jean 2012). There was always a “but”, something missing, very few mentioned the need of more aid, but most if not all said the way of providing it could be improved (Ibid.).

More participation was one of the missing parts to reach a better aid, “*if people are not involved with the project, they will not own it and take care of it.*” a local NGO staff, Cambodia (Ibid.).

Humanitarian actors always believed in the importance of participation and involving with communities, an act that lead to a better quality and accountability (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2003). However, a list of challenges hamper transforming good intentions into a meaningful participation with communities to name a few: the need to act fast and save lives, lacking access and not having the experienced staff to engage with communities (Dayna Brown and Donini 2014).

In different agreements and declarations, donors agree on the importance of community’s participation in the projects they fund, however, studies show that despite the progress accomplished through the years, consultation and engaging with local actors was one of the weakest areas of progress (ibid.), so there is still a need to enhance the practices (GHD 2013).

This dissertation is trying to build on the existing literature, starting by exploring several definitions of participation that varies according to the stockholder who defines it and the objective behind practicing it. For the purpose of this research the definition of ALNAP and Groupe URD is going to be used, this definition understands participation: as a state of mind, where populations who are in the center of the humanitarian action, are participating in one stage of the project cycle at least (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2003). Followed by presenting some of the most important typologies and frameworks of participation like Arnstein’s ladder, Pretty’s typology and white’s framework.

Pretty’s typology which is one of the most spread and used typologies in the development field, was adapted by Groupe URD and ALNAP to be used in the humanitarian projects, is going to be the basis of analyzing the case study.

Reviewing the main guidelines in humanitarian aid like: IASC and Sphere to explore their views about participation helped to give a reference and to link with some of the donors' initiatives and practices.

In the literature part, the research is trying to give answers to several key questions, such as:

- Why participation? In order to understand the key benefits and challenges while engaging with communities
- How and When to do participation? In order to explore the used approaches and the peaks of participation during the project cycles.

Even when organizations claim to use participatory approaches, is it really perceived by communities as participation? This is what the practical part of the research is trying to answer through a case study of a project done with IDPs in Syria by an international organization (International Medical Corps – IMC).

The main question of the dissertation is the following:

“What is the difference between ‘practicing’ participatory approaches by implementers and the perception of affected communities regarding these approaches in humanitarian projects?”

The analysis part is then trying to link the results of the case study with main findings of the literature review based on Pretty's typology. Several sub-questions helped in analyzing the case study: What are the levels of participation reached in the project? In which stage of the project is participation present? And what type of participatory methods and tools is used?

To sum up, this research is a modest initiative to draw the attention toward the importance of participation, not only by looking at it from the perspective of guidelines, donors, organizations, and implementers but also by trying to hear the voices of conflict affected community.

After this brief introduction, a paragraph explaining the used methodology and the limitation of the research will follow, then the dissertation's main two parts:

1- Literature review

2- Case study of the implemented project in Syria

Followed by the opinion of two other organizations (the ICRC and a local organization), and finally the dissertation's conclusion.

## 2. Methodology and limitation:

This research is focusing on the concept of participation, trying to understand it from different point of views. To do so and in order to understand the opinion of different stakeholders regarding this concept, a review of litterateur about the history of participation, levels, typologies and approaches was done.

While finding plenty of resources presenting the opinions of donors, organizations and implementers, the views of communities were rarely discussed in the literature. This is the origin of the idea of including the community members' pointy of view in the research.

The case study that endeavors to complement the theoretical part of the research is exploring a participatory project conducted by the international organization 'IMC' in an area populated with a high percentage of IDPs in Syria, a country suffering from civil war since 2011.

The study is trying to understand mainly the difference between organization's point of view and the perception of community regarding the participation process used in the project. For this objective, focus group discussions with the community and key informant interviews with implementers were the used tools to do the comparison.

To explore other points of view, key informant interviews with representatives from two organizations (The ICRC and a local organization: that chose not to be named) working in the same context were conducted.

The limitation of this research comes from the fact that Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted by a field team who I previously trained on doing so, and due to time limitations, I could not go to the field and be part of the process. Not being able to conduct the FGDs myself made me miss part of the communities' reaction that could be seen in body gestures or facial expressions, in addition, not being the note taker of the answers forced me to eliminate some of the questions when the answer was not completely understood.

Another limitation came from a technological aspect caused by the poor internet connection in the areas where key informants are located, which made it hard to do the interviews orally, so the questions were explained to the informants and they send their answers written via mail. This made me miss the interesting part of opening discussions with informants and getting more insights about their opinions around the subject.

### 3. Litterateur review:

#### 3. 1. Participation definitions:

When looking it up in the dictionary, the definition of the word “participation” gives the meaning of partnering and sharing, “*the action or fact of having or forming part of something, the sharing of something*” (“Oxford English Dictionary (OED)” 2000).

Definitions emerging from the development field gives the word a deeper meaning according mostly to the desired objective from the use of this term, so “participation” would be defined as a process with different levels of involvement, empowerment and control.

The UN leading development agency (UNDP), gives the participation the meaning of involvement, opportunities and empowerment, “*participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural, and political processes that affect their lives. It enables them to gain access to a much broader range of opportunities so they may realize their full potential and contribute to the development of their community*” (UNDP 1993).

The World Bank goes further by giving the participation the meaning of sharing control, “*participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over the development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them*” (World Bank 1994).

In their book ‘*The myth of community*’ Guijt and Shah defines the participation (from a development perspective) according to its ultimate aim, where people - especially those who have no voice (marginalized people) - have decision control over their lives (Guijt and Shah 1998).

In the humanitarian context, terms like community engagement and people-centered approach are used to define participation.

One of the earliest definitions of participation as part of the humanitarian aid work could be found in a handbook developed by ALNAP and Groupe URD about the participation of crisis-affected population, where they define the concept as the following, “*Participation in humanitarian action is understood as the engagement of affected populations in one or more phases of the project cycle: assessment; design; implementation; monitoring; and evaluation. This engagement can take a variety of forms ... Far more than a set of tools, participation is first and foremost a state of mind, according to which members of affected populations are at the*

*heart of humanitarian action, as social actors, with insights on their situation, and with competencies, energy and ideas of their own”* (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2003).

In a more recent definition (from a humanitarian perspective), the European Union also emphasizes on the idea of people playing *an active role* in the *decision-making process* during all the phases of a humanitarian project (Barry and Barham 2012).

An interesting concept presented by ALNAP is “*engagement*”, this comprehensive concept referred to any involvement of crisis-affected population in humanitarian aid. What distinguishes this definition is not only covering the interaction between communities and humanitarian actors, but also taking into account the direct response of population during, before and after crisis even if this response did not include any interaction with humanitarian actors (Dayna Brown and Donini 2014).

For the purpose of this research, ALNAP and Groupe URD’s definition of participation will be the one used, however, a special emphasis will be given to the participation of the communities in decision-making process.

### 3.2. Participation typologies:

Researchers used typologies as a starting point to look at participation forms and levels. The *ladder of citizen participation* developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 was the first leading initiative, Arnstein was at that time the director of Community Development studies for The Commons (non-profit research institute in Washington, D.C. and Chicago) when she published her article “*A Ladder of Citizen Participation*” in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. Arnstein presented her typology building on her previous experiences as a former Chief Advisor on Citizen Participation in Housing and Urban Development’s Model Cities Administration.

According to Arnstein, there was too much “*rhetoric and misleading euphemisms*” around the concept of citizen participation and the community especially those she called the “*have-not*”<sup>1</sup> had no real power (Arnstein 1969).

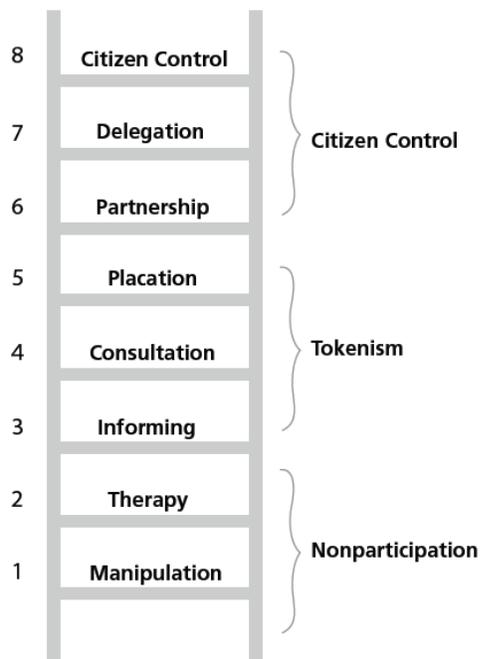
In her ladder, Arnstein is clearly linking the level of participation with the level of power and control. As shown in the following figure the ladder consists of 8 rungs, starting with 2 bottom rungs representing “*Nonparticipation*”, followed by 3 rungs of a symbolic participation

---

<sup>1</sup> Blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, and Whites

“Tokenism” finishing by the final 3 rungs of real participation or “*citizen control*” (Arnstein 1969).

**Figure 1:** Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation



**Arnstein's Ladder (1969)**

Despite some limitations in her typology (as she mentioned in the article<sup>2</sup>) Arnstein’s ladder was the starting point, followed by so many different models, which based on or criticized her famous ladder.

Some of the examples that followed her work are, Desmond M.Connor’s ladder of citizen participation in 1988 and Roger Hart’s ladder of children participation in 1992. In order to avoid some of the limitation of presenting participation’s levels in a form of a ladder<sup>3</sup>, other researchers chose to present their typologies using different shapes, like Scott Davidson’s wheel of participation in 1998 and Jans & de Backer’s Triangle of Youth Participation in 2002. OECD, UNICEF and DFID created their own participation frameworks and approaches as well.

<sup>2</sup> The limitations mentioned in the article are: 1- Considering all the “powerholders” and the “have-nots” as two homogenous blocs without taking into consideration the divergent inside each of the two blocs 2- No analysis of the main obstacles toward achieving the ultimate levels of participation 3- No firm distinction between the 8 rungs, they could be more than 8 and some characteristics could apply on different rungs (Arnstein 1969)

<sup>3</sup> Some of the limitations are: the firm division between rungs while the division is mostly blurred (Ibid.) and the linear model of the ladder which does not represent the dynamics and nature of improvement (Tritter and McCallumb 2006)

Another widely spread typology and mainly used in the development field, is the one developed by Pretty et al in 1995 (Annex 1) based on rural development projects. Pretty's typology is also normative as Arnstein's ladder, it starts with the two least participative forms "*Manipulative*" and "*Passive participation*" where the community has no power over decisions (Pretty 1995).

Then it moves to higher forms of "*consultative participation*" and "*participation motivated by material incentives*" where still the community has no real control over the decision making process, however they are more involved in the project cycle (Ibid.).

The fifth form is the "*Functional Participation*" where people participate but only within specific roles in already designed projects (Ibid.). This is perhaps the most frequently found type of participation in development (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger 1996).

The last two forms of participation are the highest, "*interactive participation*" where people are actually part of designing and analyzing a project, and finally in the last form people start taking independent initiatives and *self-mobilize* (Pretty 1995).

Both Arnstein and Pretty typologies describe a normative way where the power moves step by step from the hands of those who have it to the hands of communities, but we can argue that the ending-points of each one of the typologies are not exactly the same (Cornwall 2008).

The ultimate form of Pretty's typology "*self-mobilization*" happens when the mobilization is created from inside the community itself, but not necessarily to challenge an existing power system (Pretty 1995).

While Arnstein's "*citizen control*" seems more empowering and represents a change in the existing system toward a more power balanced one, where she sees the solution for the powerlessness and exclusion through a real citizen participation (Arnstein 1969).

Arnstein's concept of "*citizen control*" seems similar in a way to another concept "*organic participation*" proposed by Mansuri and Rao in a policy research report for the World Bank. Organic participation is defined as, "*a broad term that covers a variety of civic activities. It has historically been the norm for civic expression. It includes social movements that fight for greater democratic expression and for the rights of the underprivileged*" (Mansuri and Rao 2013).

The similarity between the two concepts comes from the fact that both seem to be claiming for more control and rights for the voiceless. However, the way of claiming those rights could be different; the organic participation often takes either a confrontational or a conflictual form

against the government, (Ibid.) while Arnstein is refereeing to a more peaceful way of claiming rights, even though her typology is designed to be “*provocative*”, as she mentioned in her article, however, the objective is to: “*encourage a more enlightened dialogue*” (Arnstein 1969).

White’s typology is another interesting participation framework which is trying to answer two important questions:

- Who participate? Concentrating on the most vulnerable while taking into consideration the heterogeneity of people (White 1996).
- How to participate? For a real involvement, communities should participate in “*management*” and “*decision-making*” not only in the implementation of a project (Ibid.).

White’s table consists of four columns, starting with the “*form*” of participation, then a *Top-Down* column illustrating the interest of the designers in the participation approaches, followed by a *Bottom-Up* column shows the participants’ point of view, while the last column represents the function of each type of participation (Ibid.).

**Table 1** typology of interests

Form	What 'participation' means to the implementing agency	What 'participation' means for those on the receiving end	What 'participation' is for
Nominal	Legitimation – to show they are doing something	Inclusion – to retain some access to potential benefits	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency – to limit funders' input, draw on community contributions and make projects more cost-effective	Cost – of time spent on project-related labour and other activities	As a means to achieving cost-effectiveness and local facilities
Representative	Sustainability – to avoid creating dependency	Leverage – to influence the shape the project takes and its management	To give people a voice in determining their own development
Transformative	Empowerment – to enable people to make their own decisions, work out what to do and take action	Empowerment – to be able to decide and act for themselves	Both as a means and an end, a continuing dynamic

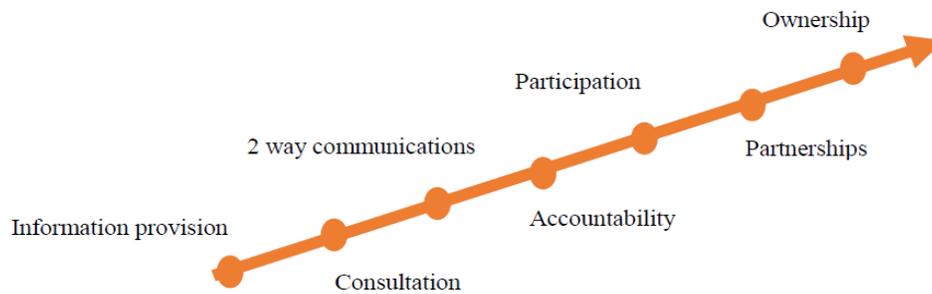
Adapted from White, 1996, pp. 7–9.

The importance of White’s framework comes from its dual perspective to the concept of participation, by looking at it from the point of view of both implementers and participants, which make it a useful tool when implementing and analyzing development projects.

In the humanitarian field, ALNAP developed an approach about the different engagement degrees of affected population in humanitarian projects (Brown et al 2014). The approach has

several steps, starting from the less engaging “*information provision*” going up to reach the most engaging “*ownership*” (Ibid.). In this approach, participation is viewed as the level where people has a real power over the decision making process (Ibid.).

**Figure 2: ALNAP – Engagement Approach**



In the previous typologies, participation was the big notion containing several levels or degrees, while in this approach, participation becomes a part of a bigger notion “*engagement*”. In this typology, participation takes a quite high place amongst other levels, by having a specific meaning of community control.

From another point of view, in their handbook, Groupe URD and ALNAP, adapted somehow Pretty’s typology and put the levels of participation under three main categories: instrumental, collaborative and supportive (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2009). Under the instrumental approach, participation is seen as a mean to achieve objectives, collaborative approach is more of a collaboration toward achieving a common objective while building the capacities of communities and the supportive approach is a way to support population own initiatives (Ibid.).

As mentioned typologies have seen participation from different angles, from a political perspective (Arnstein’s ladder), development perspective (Pretty’s and White’s typologies) or from a humanitarian aid perspective (ALNAP’s engagement approach and Groupe URD & ALNAP’s levels of participation).

For the purpose of this research, Pretty’s typology will be used to analyze the practical part of the research, as it is the most used in the development field and it was the one adapted by Groupe URD and ALNAP in their handbook.

### 3.3. Guidelines in the humanitarian aid:

Participation is a common concept mentioned in several guidelines and standards, it is a trend and an essential practice to follow in the humanitarian aid nowadays. Some of those guidelines are: Quality COMPAS, HAP, Sphere, IASC and CHS who refer mainly to the concept of active participation, a less active form of participation based mainly on communication with communities is present as well in COMPAS, HAP standards and CHS commitments.

The Quality COMPAS which is an initiative developed by Groupe URD over a five year's period of time (1999-2004), as a way to help humanitarian actors in project management and evaluation (Groupe URD 2009). The COMPAS mentions under its 6<sup>th</sup> quality criteria out of 12, 'The project respects the population', the need for informing, consulting and involving the affected community in projects (Ibid.).

On 2007, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) developed the "*Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management*" which represents "*the first international standard designed to assess, improve and recognize the accountability and quality of humanitarian programs*", the standard was revised and replaced by 2010 HAP standard edition (HAP 2010).

The standards mention "*participation*" as the fourth principle of accountability. It is viewed as an indicator of the population's consent over the activities, participation manifests through the involvement of the community - especially vulnerable groups<sup>4</sup> who are normally not heard - in the various stages of a project (assessment, design, implementation and M&E) (HAP 2013).

In this context, HAP is refereeing to the "*active participation*" where communities have a power over the decision making process, hence participation is seen as a concept closely related to empowerment (Ibid.). On a less active participation level, HAP mentions in the third principle, the accurate and timely sharing of information with the community as a way to "*deepen levels of participation*" (Ibid.). Another form of participation is mentioned in the fifth principle, which is a two-way communication between organizations and communities, through the form of complaints shared by the communities and then handled in the best way by organizations (Ibid.). Another important guideline in the humanitarian field is Sphere standards, by making the link with the principles 6 and 7 in the code of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red

---

<sup>4</sup> "*These may include women, children, elderly persons, people with disabilities, landless or homeless persons, and ethnic, racial and religious groups – not necessarily in a minority*"(HAP 2013)

Crescent Movement and NGOs, Sphere emphasizes that active participation is essential for people's right to live a dignified life (Sphere 2011) Sphere also insists on the idea of having a “*representative participation*” that includes both sex and all age groups with a special focus on the marginalized and “*invisible*” people (Ibid.).

In 2011, IASC endorsed five commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations (CAAP), NGOs agreed to incorporate them in their policies and operational guidelines and to promote for them with their partners, the commitments are the following: Leadership/Governance, Transparency, Feedback and Complaints, Participation, Design/Monitoring and Evaluation (IASC 2012). Participation according to IASC in this context refers to an active role played by the affected communities – especially *the most marginalized* – in the decision making process (Ibid.).

CHS (Core Humanitarian standards on Quality and Accountability) is a new initiative developed in 2014 based on different references<sup>5</sup> (Groupe URD et al. 2014). CHS sets nine commitments that could be used by humanitarian providers, “*to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide*” (Ibid.).

The participation concept appears in the fourth commitment<sup>6</sup>, where CHS refers to several forms of participation (Ibid.):

- A passive form that manifests in sharing information with the communities “*especially vulnerable and marginalized groups*”, while taking into consideration the context to choose the most convenient mean and language of communication
- A two-way communication through feedback received from communities to evaluate their level of satisfaction
- A more interactive form illustrated by communities' engagement in all the stages of a project

The fifth commitment is also emphasizing on the two way communication form by referring to the importance of developing complaints mechanisms and the role of implementers in addressing those complaints in a “*timely and appropriate manner*” (Ibid.).

---

<sup>5</sup> The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief/The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management/ The people in Aid of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel/The Sphere Handbook Core Standards and the Humanitarian Charter/The quality Compass/ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Commitments on Accountability to Affected People/Populations (CAAPs) and The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluation Development and Humanitarian Assistance (Groupe URD et al. 2014).

<sup>6</sup> “*Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them*” (Groupe URD et al. 2014).

In general, measuring the adherence of humanitarian actors to the previously mentioned guidelines especially to new initiatives like the CHS commitments, is not an easy task as long as adherence of actors is on a voluntary basis.

### 3.4. Donors and participation:

After a meeting in Stockholm, in 2003, 17 donors belonging to different countries endorsed an initiative aiming for better donors' practices "*The Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donor ship*" ("About GHD" 2016), in the following years 24 other governments' donors signed it (GHD 2013).

The concept of participation manifests in the 7<sup>th</sup> general principle as the following: "*Request implementing humanitarian organisations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response*" ("About GHD" 2016).

After 10 years of developing these principles, GHD did a self-assessment to know more about the adherence of donors, 27 donor members participated in the self-assessment amongst them: USA, UK and the European commission (GHD 2013).

According to the assessment, most of the donors rely in term of participation on the implementing partners, and they only check their participative performance after the project is completed by reviewing their reports (Ibid.). Amongst the leading donors in communities' involvement appear Sida (Sweden) and SDC (Switzerland) (Ibid.). The report concluded that some of the members agreed on the importance of gathering efforts toward reaching more participation with communities (Ibid.).

In the same direction, another document presented by Development Assistance Committee (DAC), about lessons "*towards better humanitarian donor ship*", participation stand out in one of the lessons as a call for prioritization: "*lesson 4: prioritise participation*" (OECD 2012). The document refers to the GDH, mentioning that donors have made "*a little progress*" in including communities, however, a need for reinforcement is still present (Ibid.).

The document presents some recommendations to donors to be more participative in their approaches such as, focusing on a gender balanced participation, spending more time in understanding the context and the power structure inside communities and a more flexible donation from the donors' part (Ibid.).

From the EU part, the representatives of the European government members issued on 2008 a joint declaration called “*European consensus on humanitarian aid*”, the document refers to affected people as dignified human beings that have all the right to participate in all decisions related to their lives (“European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid” 2008). This joint statement gives a specific focus to the participation of *women* when approaching gender in humanitarian aid, “*the EU recognises that the active participation of women in humanitarian aid is essential, and commits to promoting that involvement*” (Ibid.).

Despite all these promising signs, practice does not necessary live up to donors’ declarations. A study made by Oxfam reviewed the practices of humanitarian actors in empowering local capacities and engaging communities, the study concluded that although participation is one of the indicators used by DFID to assess the quality of a project before granting a donation, comparing to other criteria participation does not have the same weight. So if a project does not really show a “*good commitment of local involvement*” it does not mean that it would be a subject to funding denial (Delaney and Ocharan 2012).

According to the study, USAID goes in the same direction, as there is only one reference to beneficiary participation in its funding indicators which is “*counting heads*” (Ibid.). To sum up, organizations are not obliged to demonstrate participation of local communities in projects to receive funding (Ibid.).

### 3.5. Why participation?

Participation could be considered a right, a duty or an obligation, it could be a mean to attend an objective or an objective in itself, all depends on how humanitarian actors are looking at it.

HAP and the EU see participation as a right for the affected population (“European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid” 2008; Davis 2007) while others argue that it is a moral duty (Dayna Brown and Donini 2014). It could be also considered as an obligation from humanitarian actors toward guidelines and standards – such as: Sphere or ICRC code of conduct - or toward donors or own institutional policy (Barry and Barham 2012).

Participation as a way to achieve an objective could be referred to as “*instrumental participation*”, in order to get better information, assess contexts, improve quality and reduce costs (Dayna Brown and Donini 2014). In this form of participation, affected communities could be assigned a specific role in an already designed project, when implementing this type of

participation, one should be careful not to slip into some kind of a manipulative act that imposes roles on communities (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2009).

Other forms of participation “*collaborative*” or “*supportive*” concentrate more on strengthening the capacity of population and empowering them, which gives the feeling of ownership toward implemented projects (Ibid.). Some refer to these benefits under the name of “*civic or value based benefit*”, relating it to “*principles of equity, empowerment, democratic participation and the development and behavioral change of individuals and civil society*” (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2009).

Even during two-way communications, dialogues with communities give them the opportunity to complain and to express their opinion about the quality of aid provided to them by humanitarian actors (Ibid.).

When thinking in term of accountability, engaging with communities is a very effective way to understand better the needs, organizations can then better respond and fulfill its commitments toward populations (The Brookings institution 2008).

Regarding efficiency, proving that participation is cost effective is not an easy task, as it is challenging to estimate how much money could be saved due to a real participation, however, case studies from the field shows considerable expand of projects thanks to communities’ engagement and motivation (Barry and Barham 2012). The world bank tried to study the cost of participation process through evaluating the costs of 42 participatory projects, the study showed that the early stages of those projects were more costly due to supervising and strengthening local capacities, the most important cost in the process was the salary of participation experts, while in the long run, participation tend to pay off its relatively higher cost (Rudqvist and Woodford-Berger 1996).

While the positive aspects of participation are easy to see, some risks could also be linked to the participation process. Do No Harm is a principle that should always be a lens to look through while conducting any activity, so organizations should always make sure that participation is not harming communities in any way (Ibid.).

For instance, in conflict situation, some armed groups or governments will not always allow or appreciate engaging with communities, even talking with humanitarian actors could be dangerous for populations (Ibid.). Another important point to consider is while taking into account the opinion of community leaders, ensuring real representation of communities is a key

toward achieving a balanced participation, organization should be careful not for community participation to be manipulated or biased by the leaders (Ibid.).

Some voices challenged the effectiveness of participation mentioning that it did not promote for a redistribution of power, instead it maintained and even masked the unbalanced relationships (Cooke and Kothari 2001). In their book, Cooke and Kothari doubt that top-down organizations can give power decisions to populations, rather than just include them to justify already made decisions (Ibid.).

In general, more voices from the humanitarian aid world is realizing the importance of participation and calling for more engagement from the part of communities, however, actors should be aware and ready to mitigate the potential risks associated with this process.

### 3.6. Participation: How and When?

Integrating participation in the development field was initiated in the 1990s through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach which was developed and widely spread as an evolution of another set of approaches, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) (Chambers 1992).

PRA was defined by Chambers as “*a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act*” (Ibid.).

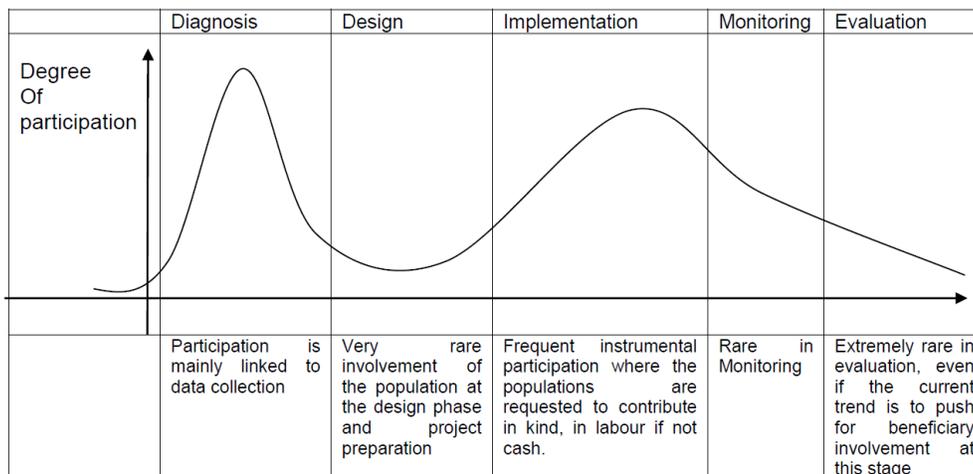
PRA approaches give power to participants not only during the phase of gathering information, but also during the following steps of the project cycle where voice of people is considered a determinant factor in analyzing the gathered information and planning the implementation of the project (Chambers 1994).

Different tools are used depending on the stage of the project. Studies from 2008, shows that the high peak of participation is in the *diagnosis* level (Grünwald and de Geoffroy 2008), at this stage the approaches used is mainly consulting communities (ALNAP and Groupe URD 2009) to learn more about the context and needs before intervention.

*Implementation* is the second highest peak, at this stage, one of the common forms of participation is assigning roles to communities in return of incentives, programs like cash or food for work are best examples (Ibid.). *Monitoring and evaluation*, seems less engaging, however, it is getting better through initiating more communication between communities and aid workers,

especially under the form of complaint mechanisms using new technology like mobile phones and social media (Dayna Brown and Donini 2014).

**Figure 3:** Participation during project cycle



Adapted from Grünwald and de Geoffroy, 2008

## 4. Case study:

### 4.1. Overview of the context:

Syria, a country in the Middle East with a total population of around 23M people before the crisis - that started in March 2011 - the number of population now is hard to tell exactly because of the instability in the country (“World Population Review” 2016). However, some estimate the total population in 2016 by around 17M (“Syria Military Strength” 2016).

The humanitarian response plan produced by UN-OCHA for 2016, estimated the number of people in need as 13.5M and the number of displaced around 6.5M, lots of Syrians also fled the country and sought refuge in neighboring or European countries<sup>7</sup> (OCHA 2015).

The internal displacement is concentrated in the remaining safe areas of the 14 Syrian governorates like parts of Damascus and the coastal cities of Tartous and Lattakia (OCHA 2014). Tartous governorate is located on the coast of the Mediterranean, it is one of the governorates

<sup>7</sup> More than 4.8 million Syrians are registered as refugees in neighboring countries (UNHCR 2016a). Total asylum seekers 1,037,760 between April 2011 and April 2016 (UNHCR 2016b)

that has not been directly affected by the Syrian crisis, however, because of its safe location it has attracted a huge influx of displacement (Ibid.).

Al-Busira, where the project of the case study took place is located in rural-Tartous, it is a summer resort that was overwhelmed with the flow of displacement because of its safe location. As the area is built to be only inhabited during summer by limited number of people, the infrastructure of the city was not able to cope with the increase influx of people that reached 21,600 habitants (92% of whom are IDPs) (Kazwini 2015).

#### 4.2. Overview of the Organization:

International Medical Corps (IMC), is an international non- governmental organization started working in 1984. The organization has headquarter in the USA and is active in 70 countries (“International Medical Corps” 2016).

IMC has different projects in the following fields: emergency responses and preparedness, health services support, family and community health, women’s & children’s health, mental health and psychological support, WASH, nutrition and food security (Ibid.).

IMC started working in Syria in 2007 - before the Syrian crisis - to support Iraqi refugees, after the crisis its projects expanded to cover Syrian IDPs (Ibid.). IMC is also supporting Syrian refugees in neighboring countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey (Ibid.).

The organization has proved itself as a medical organization with expertise in Primary Health Care, mental health, maternal and child health, IMC has also programs in psychological support, gender based violence, Emergency and WASH (Ibid.).

The emergency department was initiated in Damascus in 2012 to respond to the needs of IDPs in shelters, another section was created in Tartous city in 2013 to cover the needs of IDPs in shelters and open communities (areas with high percentages of IDPs).

The main responsibilities of the emergency team are: conducting assessments in shelters and open communities and then responding according to the needs by the distribution of Non-Food Items (NFI) or conducting hygiene or health awareness sessions and campaigns.

### 4.3. The Project – Waste Management Campaign:

#### 4.3.1. Assessment:

As a first step, after receiving an approval to work in “Al-Busira” area, the team developed the assessment tools and then conducted it using three methods: Focus group discussions with men and women, host and IDPs from the community, key informant interviews with community leaders and observation (Kazwini 2015).

The assessment was conducted in one day on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2015 by a team of IMC staff and Red Crescent volunteers, the results of the assessment showed a need for a waste management campaign (Ibid.). It was the main problem mentioned by communities and was also obvious from the team’s observation (Ibid.).

The team decided to conduct a hygiene campaign about the management of the waste in the area, to do so, more needed to be learned about the communities’ knowledge, main problems and solutions concerning this topic, so 419 baseline surveys<sup>8</sup> were conducted in the area about waste management on a sample randomly chosen by the community (Ibid.).

The main findings were the need of NFI distribution (garbage bags, containers and hygiene kits) and education sessions about the main diseases related to the waste accumulation and the proper way of waste disposal (Ibid.).

#### 4.3.2. Implementation:

To address the needs, the team ordered related NFI to distribute in the area and developed materials to conduct education sessions for communities about waste management disposal and types of diseases related to it (Ibid.).

The team tried to involve the community in different ways during implementation. In distribution, they were part of the distribution team and in education sessions 27 volunteers from the community were trained on the materials and they were the ones conducting the education sessions for their community (Ibid.). The community also provided free different locations to do the distribution and to conduct the education sessions (Ibid.).

---

<sup>8</sup> “A sample of 5% of the targeted community should have been interviewed but as there was a need for a promote respond and no time to conduct the baseline survey amongst the whole right sample, so the baseline survey was limited to the capacity of what the team can conduct in one day field work which was 419 surveys.” (Kazwini 2015) approximately similar number was used in the end line survey.

The team also conducted children activities in the two schools of the area, with the help of teachers and community volunteers (Ibid.).

#### 4.3.3. End line survey:

A random sample of 421 adults living in the area participated in the end-line survey (Ibid.). The survey showed a high level of participation from the part of communities in the campaign activities, a better knowledge about the diseases related to waste accumulation and their ways of transmission, and the most important part was that communities were able to identify the key messages about the right ways of waste disposal (Ibid.).

#### 4.4. Discussion: comparing the view of implementers with the perception of participants

The objective of this case study is to compare the opinion of community in “Al-Busira” area who were part of the campaign with the opinion of the campaign implementers. For this purpose, three focus group discussions (FGD) with a total of 28 people from the community was conducted and two surveys were filled by members of the implementation team.

The focus group discussions and the surveys approached the following points: type of participation – if exists – in different stages of the project, role of communities in decision making process, impressions, challenges, and recommendations for improvement. The survey addressed as well the purpose behind using participation.

##### 4.4.1. Participation in practice: How and when?

According to participants in FGD, their participation in the project was mainly:

- During assessments through answering questions
- During the education sessions where they informed others about the sessions, volunteered to conduct the sessions, registered the names of attendances and give them numbers
- During distribution where they participated in handling NFI and arranging the queue

However, the participants said that even though they did not actually participate in the designing process, they had a say in who is going to volunteer, where the activity will be conducted and where to put the garbage containers.

All participants stated that they did not participate in the monitoring and evaluation process, even though the team conducted an end line survey to evaluate the campaign, but apparently for community it was not clear as a tool of M&E.

From this information when comparing with the literature, we see that the “when” matches Grünewald and de Geoffroy figure, where the community stated their participation in *assessment* and *implementation* stage. While their role in *designing* was not so decisive and they did not see any role for them in the last stage of M&E.

The “how” also matches the observation of ALNAP and Groupe URD in their handbook about participation, as during assessments the role of community was to answer to implementers’ questions and in the designing process they were mostly under the instrumental approach, where volunteers were given specific roles in the designed project.

The implementers thought that the community participated in all stages of the project. Their answers were similar to the community’ answers about their participation during the assessment and implementation process. However, they considered that community participated in the designing process when community was informed about the project, when they shared their opinion during assessment and during their training on educational materials. Implementers mentioned as well that communities participated in M&E during the end line survey.

We can see that the discrepancy of answers between the two sides is related to designing stage, which is related partially to the misunderstanding of what designing really means. It is true that part of the designing process comes from the opinion of communities about their priority problems and proposed solutions, however, designing a project is related more to what to do with this information and how to turn them into action and activities.

The second mismatch in answers is related to M&E stage, where community did not relate to the end line survey as an evaluation method. Both sides – community and implementers – did not mention the existence of a complaint mechanism, which could make the M&E process clearer for communities.

#### 4.4.2. Decision making process:

Participants in the FGD felt that they participated in the decision making process, some said that this was during every step, others specified that their participation in decision making was during

the assessment when they gave their opinion while the majority mentioned that they had a decisive role in choosing the location of sessions.

Implementers had approximately the same point of view, as they mentioned that community participated in the decision making process by providing information during assessment and via choosing the locations and the volunteers.

Both answers give the impression that the participation of community in the decision making process was limited even though both parties believe that community participated in making them. However, if the decision making done by the community involved only giving information or choosing location and volunteers, most probably other important decisions was being made on a management level without the full involvement of communities.

This point shows that this participatory project did not reach the ultimate involvement of community in the decision making process.

#### 4.4.3. Impressions about the involvement:

Participants in FGD expressed their satisfaction from the experience, they stated that the campaign expanded their knowledge and raised the community's awareness. Community volunteers thought that participating in the campaign gave them trust in themselves and they felt like an ambassador for the knowledge they gain so they tried to spread it in their community.

From the implementers' point of view, participation is the best way to transmitter information to communities, as when community feels the ownership of a campaign they do their best to make it successful. Moreover, being in a constant contact with the community through their active participation gives them enough space for a continuous feedback. On a personal level, participation stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit of people, increases their sense of responsibilities and improves their skills and knowledge.

The implementers mentioned that participation was a mean and an objective at the same time. It aimed to empower the volunteers in order to reach communities through them. Participation also helped to achieve the objective of the project which was transmitting the information to communities in an easy and fast way that guarantees better results.

Implementer's mentioned using Sphere standards as a reference for the use of participatory approaches, they added also that participation is impeded in the substance of the organization

and its objectives, as one of the IMC'S main objectives is to empower community and participation is one of the best way to do so.

Although community was instrumentalized and put into specific roles in the project, participation in itself was an objective for the organization. The community feeling that they gained trust and the implementers aiming to empower them is the illustration of having participation as one of the project's objectives.

#### 4.4.4. Challenges and recommendations:

Participants acknowledged facing some challenges that limited their participation, in particular they specified the difficulty of commitment, the weather, conducting activities in open spaces, sickness of some volunteers or implementers and disagreement with other participants. Implementers from their side said that some challenges were faced in the beginning, like: lack of commitment as people cannot volunteer for ever because they need an income generating job, choosing some people as volunteer could create some kind of sensitivity with others who were not chosen, however, implementers were able to overcome some of the challenges.

Participants proposed having more participation in the future and some kind of incentives. While implementers insisted on creating more trust with community as a way to enhance their participation.

#### 4.5. Analysis – IMC project:

When reviewing the answers of participants in FGD and implementers in key informant interviews, we notice that the project used different levels of participation from Pretty's typology.

It started from the level 2 of pretty's typology "*passive participation*" by sharing information about the campaign, this is according to the implementers who agreed that sharing information through posters was one of the ways used to include community in all the steps of the project except the assessment and M&E. While community represented by participants in the FGD, did not mention sharing information as a type of their involvement in the campaign.

Both community and implementers agreed that community was part of the level 3 "*participation by consultation*" and level 5 "*functional participation*" of pretty's typology, during the assessment and the implementation of the project. They both agreed as well, that they were not

involved in level 6 of “*interactive participation*” that could have been manifested in any sort of complaint mechanism.

Level 7 of “*self-mobilization*” was part of the participation types mentioned by the implementers, where community was provided with needed materials and they initiated related activities by themselves, however, this form was not mentioned by communities as part of their participation in the project.

Other forms of participation like level 1 “*Manipulative participation*” and 4 “*Participation for material incentives*” from pretty’s typology were not part of the community nor the implementers’ answers.

It seems that the two extreme forms of participation the passive one and the self-mobilization did not seem to be forms that community could identify as participation. So for the first extreme of only sharing information with community, as people did not see a role for themselves in it, they did not consider it as a form of participation, and for the other more challenging extreme when people initiated activities – even with the material support from the organization – they did not see it as a form of participation maybe due to the fact that they initiated the activity and had the decisive role in it.

#### 4.6. Recommendations:

After analyzing this project, it really seems that the organization made efforts to include the community in their project through the use of participatory approaches. The answers did not challenge the literature that says that most participation is consultative during assessments and instrumental during implementation. However, the two extremes of participation, passive and self-initiating were also present in the answers of only the implementers.

Having already the basis to start, the organization can build up on this experience, to reinforce the already existing forms of participation especially the ultimate form of “*self-initiating*” and enhance the other forms during other stages of designing and M&E. Improving the role of community in decision making process seems one of the things that the organization can work on, starting from defining how far the organization want for community to be involved in decisions.

Developing a complaint mechanism could be a very good step to create a two-way communication between community and the organization and to give more transparency to the participation process.

## 5. Other points of view:

In order to make the research more exhaustive, the point of view of the ‘Water and Habitat’ department from the ICRC movement and a local organization (who chose not to be named) working in the area were taken into account. Similar questions to those asked to IMC-implementers were asked to both organizations, in order to learn more about their participation approaches.

### 5.1. ICRC point of view:

The questions were asked to an engineer from the ‘Water and Habitat’ department to have an idea about the ICRC’s approach regarding participation in conflict zones and especially in the Syrian context. The engineer worked in Syria for 4 years responding to the continuous water crisis in different districts.

According to him, the level of community’s participation depends on the level of emergency, so when the ICRC is responding to new movement of people, community’s participation is on its lowest level “*passive*”, however, when the population is more settled, their participation becomes higher.

He added that the participation of the community in the WASH related projects was mainly limited to sharing information with the community, asking their opinion during gathering information and M&E stages and rarely giving them a role in the implementation of the project (only during cleaning campaigns). The engineer stated “*In all cases the participation method is asking questions*” to community leaders and the most influential in the community, this could neglect vulnerable groups like women and children, so the ICRC tries if possible to discuss with female members of the community.

Concerning the decision making process, the ICRC representative said that they try to have the community’s saying over decisions, by knowing their priorities and needs, and then responding to what they want, however, the only obstacle is when their propositions are not technically

applicable (because of wind direction or soil type), in this kind of situation the engineer said, “*we tend to reason with them to arrive to a win-win situation*”.

The engineer mentioned that in his department’s activities, participation was not an objective in itself, rather a tool to improve the intervention. Building capacities and supporting communities were not really a target except in hygiene promotion activities.

He concluded by saying that “*having people participating is good*”, however, “*the fear is that we might be dragged to an agenda that contradict with our principles of equality in distributing*”, that is why there is a need to be attentive to ethnic and religious sensitivities in communities.

### 5.1.1. Analysis – ICRC:

According to the answers, it seems that the ICRC’s approach of participation in this case is limited to relatively low level of participation, level 2 “*passive participation*”, level 3 “*participation by consultation*” and rarely level 5 “*Functional participation*” of pretty’s typology.

The ICRC’s way of participation matches somehow Grünewald and de Geoffroy studies that says that the peak of participation is during diagnosis stage by asking community questions, however, the engineer also mentioned that they do ask for the community’s opinion during M&E, which seemed a less engaging stage according to Grünewald and de Geoffroy.

As for the decision making involvement, it seems that the ICRC in this case tries to have the people’s saying in the decision process, but this could face some technical limitations. This could be understandable from the point of view of an engineer as his intervention is very technical, however, trying to discuss with the community to arrive to a win-win situation seems a very good solution that does not include forcing decisions using the technical reason as an excuse.

Being attentive to principles and contexts during participation is a very good point raised by the ICRC representative this is especially important in conflict situations where the ICRC is mainly active.

In general, as stated by the engineer for his department, “*participation is not an objective rather a tool*”, as a technical department, it seems that the ‘Water and Habitat’ department is trying to involve community the maximum that its technical interventions is allowing, however, it is still a limited participation and could be improved perhaps if capacity building through participation becomes one of the projects’ objectives.

## 5.2. Local organization point of view:

This local organization (which preferred not to be named) is one of the biggest in Tartous, it was established in 2008 and it works in different domains amongst them hygiene related projects. It has different projects in various areas in Tartous and “Al-Busira” is one of its targeted areas.

According to the organization’s representative, the organization uses participatory approaches while collecting information at the beginning and at the end of a project using tools such as, surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, meetings and workshops with communities.

Concerning the decision making process, the representative said that most of the time the content and the objective of the project is derived from the community’ needs and answers after conducting several assessments.

For this local organization, the participation of communities was a tool to reach the objective of the project but not an objective in itself. It helps reaching a high level of positive effects and engagement from communities in a specific project, it also contributes in building IDPs’ capacities. For our organization, the representative said, “*Participation of communities gives us more credibility and helps us allocate our available resources according to the needs of the community*”.

The representative mentioned some of the challenges faced by the organization while applying participatory approaches such as finding the best ways to attract community and understanding the gender differences while engaging with them. She concluded by confirming that participation is the corner stone for the success of any project, and admitted the need of her organization to train employees on the best way of engaging with communities and to have guidelines to lead the organization’s work toward diversifying the used participatory methods.

### 5.2.1. Analysis – Local organization:

From the representative’s answers we can conclude that the local organization was limited to only one level of participation, “*participation by consultation*” which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of pretty’s typology.

The organization used this type of participation during the diagnosis stage but also as a part of the final stage of M&E, just like the ICRC, so the organization matched Grünewald and de

Geoffroy literature in having a participation peak at the diagnosis level, however, the organization second peak is the M&E stage not the implementation one.

The decision making process seems to be limited, it is done by taking into consideration community' opinions collected during assessments, which does not seem enough engaging in the decision making process.

For the local organization, as it was for the ICRC, participation was a mean to reach the goal, during the process, participation helped in building community's capacities and gave the organization more credibility.

## 6. Participation: feasibility and constraints:

The previous example of IMC project shows that participation is possible even in a country living a conflict situation, however, some points were considered conditional for this level of participation to be feasible:

- The context where the project was implemented is considered safe and calm
- Projects conducted in the area are not purely emergency projects
- IDPs in the area are settled down from at least one year – i.e they are not people on the move

Being able to satisfy all these three conditions in different areas of the conflictual situation of Syria – or even other countries suffering from a conflict – seems challenging and not possible everywhere. So the question to be raised is, *can the organization achieve the same level of participation in the absence of at least one of the previously mentioned conditions?*

Implementing projects in zones where safety and security are not guaranteed is a challenge for implementing the different aspects of any project, including participation. Continuous access and active communication with communities could be jeopardized in such situations.

The level of Emergency or having people on the move as the ICRC engineer mentioned could limit the level of people's participation, in such situations balancing between responding fast to people's essential needs or taking the time to involve them in the process could be challenging.

Different other challenges can be raised by organizations working in conflict areas regarding participation other than the previously mentioned ones, such as:

- Cost versus efficiency: *will the cost spend on involving with communities be worth the results in a situation where every penny matters?*

- Safety and security of target population: *Would safety and security of population be jeopardized at any point by any part of the fighting group?*
- Sensitivity of involvement: *Would involvement with certain communities do more harm than good, if not all the aspects of the conflict were well understood?*

In general, conflict situations is obviously more challenging for implementing participation, so at the end it is the organizations' choice to implement it or not and on different levels.

## 7. Conclusion:

This research is an attempt to understand *participation* on two levels: theoretical and practical. From the theoretical perspective, parts of the concept's history and typology was explored to give a basis for analyzing the practical part. Guidelines gave a reference to how ideally participation should be in practice, while case studies showed some discrepancy in practice.

The practical part of the research which takes a case study of a project conducted in "Al-Busira" area in Syria, tried to compare between the opinion of implementers and community regarding the participatory approaches used in the project.

Being able to listen to the opinion of community enriched this research. And when comparing with the implementers' views, the two matched in some points and varied in others. Both agreed that community were consulted during the base line assessment and were given specific roles to do in the project. These findings matched the theory that shows that the consultative participation in the design stage and the functional participation during implementation are the most common forms of participation in humanitarian aid projects.

The discrepancy in opinion was mainly regarding the two extreme forms of participation, the passive form that includes only sharing information and the self-mobilization where initiatives came from community. Implementers stated using both forms during different stages of the project while communities did not identify them amongst the used forms. Which gives the impression that when community are only informed or have the complete power over an initiative it does not count as a participation per say for them.

In general, the community in this project felt engaged in the decision making process, however, the answers showed that their decisive participation was limited to giving opinion during assessments and choosing the implementation locations. Implementers shared the same opinion

which shows that the understanding of ‘decision making’ seems limited for both community and implementers.

To understand more about participation practices in the area, the opinion of the ICRC and a local organization was consulted. Both organizations agreed on using consultation with communities as the most common participatory approach, something that was found also when studying IMC project and matches completely the literature.

ICRC and the local organization stated that participation was a mean to achieve objectives which is normally the most common attitude organizations have toward participation while IMC’s implementers considered it a mean and an objective which shows an intention for a higher involvement with community.

While everyone agreed that participation is a good thing, yet each organization set different limits to how far they engaged with community. One thing that came across from the three organizations is that no one mentioned having an effective complaint mechanism which could be if complains are addressed properly a very transparent participatory method.

This research which tried to see the difference between implementers and community’s way of looking at participation noticed a limited understanding and practice of participation from both sides, which pushes toward investing in a more comprehensive understanding of the concept to create a common ground between organizations and community about what is intended to be achieved before starting any project.

No doubt that applying participatory approaches in conflict situations is more challenging than in other emergency situations, however, still feasible. Organizations who put more efforts into involving with communities could on the long term guarantee more ownership and sustainability for its projects, which could make the transition period between emergency, early recovery and development a smooth process.

A conclusion could be summarized from this study is that the calls of some donors for achieving more effective participation in humanitarian aid projects that exceeds the basic consultative or functional forms is still valid.

## 8. Annexes:

### 8.1. Annex 1: Pretty's typology of Participation:

Typology	Characteristics of Each Type
1. <i>Manipulative Participation</i>	Participation is simply a pretence, with 'people's' representatives on official boards but who are unelected and have no power.
2. <i>Passive Participation</i>	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. It involves unilateral announcements by an administration or project management without any listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
3. <i>Participation by Consultation</i>	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and so control analysis. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
4. <i>Participation for Material Incentives</i>	People participate by contributing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Farmers may provide the fields and labour, but are involved in neither experimentation nor the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
5. <i>Functional Participation</i>	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. People may participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Such involvement may be interactive and involve shared decision making, but tends to arise only after major decisions have already been made by external agents. At worst, local people may still only be coopted to serve external goals.
6. <i>Interactive Participation</i>	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systemic and structured learning processes. As groups take control over local decisions and determine how available resources are used, so they have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. <i>Self-Mobilization</i>	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Self-mobilization can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework of support. Such self-initiated mobilization may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

Adapted from Jules Pretty (1995)

## 8.2. Annex 2: FGD questionnaires:

- 1- Did you feel that IMC project was engaging you (Simplify and explain “engaging” when asking this question), how (give examples)?
- 2- For each of the following phases of the project, please indicate the activities that involve you and how?

Project cycle	IMC – Waste Management project – give examples
1. Gathering information (assessment)	
2. Planning (including project proposal)	
3. Project Implementation:	
3.a. Education sessions	
3.b. Distribution	
3.c. Children’s activities	
3.d. Cleaning campaigns	
4. Monitoring & Evaluation	

- 3- Do you think you had a role in the decision making of the project (subject, priority, location, others)? If yes, how, specify in each step? If no, why not?
- 4- Did you feel that your concerns, opinions and suggestions were heard by the implementers of the project? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- 5- How did you (the community) live this experience (personally, skills, empowerment)?
- 6- What was good and what was bad in participation (for the community and for the projects’ results)? Will the good influence have a long term effect or is it only short term?
- 7- How do you think the participation of the community in the projects affected the achievement of the results (positively or negatively)?
- 8- What were the challenges or the constraints for the community’s participation?
- 9- How do you appreciate the general participation approach of the project? Propose a number from 0 (very bad) to 5 (excellent).
- 10- How this could be improved in the coming projects (more participation/ different types of participation/...)?
- 11- What are your recommendations or suggestions for the next project related to community participation?

### 8.3. Annex 3: IMC – implementers’ survey:

- 1- Did you use any participatory approaches in any phase of the waste management project? If yes, please fill in the following table by indicating in the corresponding box what tool (Focus group discussion, etc.) and/or mechanism (listen to opinions, concerns, and suggestions) that you used to involve the community?

Pretty’s typology	Passive participation L2	Participation by consultation L3	Functional Participation L5	Interactive Participation L6	Self-Mobilization L7	This row is for my own analyze
Organization role (participative tools)	Posting announcement about events (sharing information)	Conducting assessments to ask about problems’ priorities and potential proposed solutions (survey, FGD, KI, meetings or workshops with the community, etc.)	Training volunteers to do a specific role in the designed program	Installing a complaints and feedback mechanisms	Providing enough resources (technical knowledge, materials, etc.) for independency	Others or No tools used (specify)
Population role	Being informed about steps and process	Answering questions, participating in meetings or workshops	Providing actual resources (volunteering, providing materials,...)	Sharing feedback/concerns/ complaints (2 ways communications)	Community initiatives	Others or No role for population (specify)
Project cycle						
1. Gathering information						
2. Planning (including project proposal)						
3. Project Implementation:						
3.a. Education sessions						
3.b. Distribution						
3.c. Children’s activities						
3.d. Cleaning campaigns						
4. Monitoring & Evaluation						

- 2- Indicate also if the community was involved in the decision making of the project (e.g. the selection of the subject, the priorities, the location, etc.) examples?
- 3- Who participated? Was there any selecting criteria for the participants?
- 4- Why did you choose to use participatory approaches? What exactly you wanted to achieve?
- For the community (personally, skills, empowerment)?
  - For the organization /for the project?
  - Was the participation a purpose in itself or a mean to achieve the desired results?
  - Was the participation cost /time /resources efficient, comparing to the achieved results?
- 5- Do you think you achieved the desired results through the participatory approaches? What did you achieve and what not (basing on the desired results in Q6), why? Do you think some of these results would have a lasting influence on the community (specify the short term and long term influence)?

- 6- How do you think the participation of the community in the projects affected the achievement of the targeted results (positively or negatively)?
- 7- Did you have a reference or a guideline to use during your participatory project? Does your organization has its own participative framework?
- 8- Were there any other organizations working in the area (using or not participative approaches) and their work affected in one way or another your way of working (affected the reaction or the expectation of the community)?
- 9- What were the challenges or the constraints while applying participative approaches?
- 10- How this could be improved (more participation of the community /other types of participation/...)?
- 11- What are the lessons learned from the use of these approaches?

#### 8.4. Annex 4: Other organizations – survey:

1- Do you use generally any participatory approaches in any phase of your projects? If yes, please fill in the following table by indicating in the corresponding box what tool (Focus group discussion, etc.) and/or mechanism (listen to opinions, concerns, and suggestions) that you used to involve the community?

Pretty's typology	Passive participation L2	Participation by consultation L3	Functional Participation L5	Interactive Participation L6	Self-Mobilization L7	This row is for my own analyze
Organization role (participative tools)	Posting announcement about events (sharing information)	Conducting assessments to ask about problems' priorities and potential proposed solutions (survey, FGD, KI, meetings or workshops with the community, etc.)	Training volunteers to do a specific role in the designed program	Installing a complaints and feedback mechanisms	Providing enough resources (technical knowledge, materials, etc.) for independency	Others or No tools used (specify)
Population role	Being informed about steps and process	Answering questions, participating in meetings or workshops	Providing actual resources (volunteering, providing materials,...)	Sharing feedback/concerns/complaints (2 ways communications)	Community initiatives	Others or No role for population (specify)
Project cycle						
1. Gathering information						
2. Planning (including project proposal)						
3. Project Implementation:						
3.a. Education sessions						
3.b. Distribution						
3.c. Children's activities						
3.d. Cleaning campaigns						
4. Monitoring & Evaluation						

2- Indicate also if communities are involved in the decision making of projects (e.g. the selection of the subject, the priorities, the location, etc.) examples?

3- Who participate normally? Is there any specific selecting criteria for the participants?

4- Why do you choose to use participatory approaches? What exactly you want to achieve?

- For the community (personally, skills, empowerment)?
- For the organization /for the project?
- Is the participation a purpose in itself or a mean to achieve the desired results?
- Is the participation cost /time /resources efficient, comparing to the achieved results?

5- Do you think you achieve the desired results through the participatory approaches? Do you think some of these results would have a lasting influence on the community (give examples on short term and long term influence)?

6- How do you think the participation of the community in projects affect the achievement of the targeted results (positively or negatively)?

7- Did you have a reference or a guideline to use during your participatory project? Does your organization has its own participative framework?

8- What are the challenges or the constraints while applying participative approaches?

9- How this could be improved (more participation of the community /other types of participation/...)?

10- What are the lessons learned from the use of these approaches?

## 9. Bibliography

“About GHD.” 2016.

ALNAP, and Groupe URD. 2003. “Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: A Handbook for Practitioners.” ODI - London.

ALNAP, and Groupe URD. 2009. “Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers - Involving Crisis-Affected People in a Humanitarian Response.”

Anderson, Mary, Dayna Brown, and Isabella Jean. 2012. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. “A Ladder of Citizen Participation.” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners (JAIP)* 35 (4): 216–24.

Barry, Neil, and Jane Barham. 2012. “Review of Existing Practices to Ensure Participation of Disaster-Affected Communities in Humanitarian Aid Operations.” ECHO-European Community Humanitarian Office.

Brown, D, A Donini, and P Knox Clarke. 2014. “Engagement of Crisis-Affected People in Humanitarian Action.” ALNAP.

Brown, Dayna, and Antonio Donini. 2014. “Rhetoric or Reality? Putting Affected People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action.” ALNAP.

Chambers, Robert. 1992. “Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory.” Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 311.

CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, and the Sphere Project. 2014. “Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.” CHS Alliance, Groupe URD, and the Sphere Project.

Chambers, Robert. 1994. “The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal.” *World Development* 22 (7): 953–69.

Cohen, Roberta. 2008. “LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE DISPLACED: Lessons Learned.” Brookings Project on Internal Displacement.

“Community Participation in Local Health and Sustainable Development - Approaches and Techniques.” 2002. European Sustainable Development and Health Series: 4 - WHO.

Connor, Desmond M. 1988. “A New Ladder of Citizen Participation.” *National Civi Review* 77.

Cooke, Bill, and Uma Kothari. 2001. *Participation: The New Tyranny?*

- Cornwall, Andera. 2008. "Unpacking 'Participation': Models, Meanings and Practices."
- Davidson, Scott. 1998. "Spinning the Wheel of Empowerment." *Planning* 1262: 14–15.
- Davis, Austen. 2007. "Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action." Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN).
- "Declaration of Alma-Ata \_ International Conference on Primary Health Care." 1978.
- Delaney, Michael, and Jacobo Ocharan. 2012. "Local Capacity in Humanitarian Response: Vision or Mirage?" Oxfam America.
- DFID. 2010. "Youth Participation in Development - A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers." DFID-CSO Youth working group.
- "European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid." 2008. Official journal of the European Union.
- "Evaluation-and-Participation-Some-Lessons.pdf." 2016.
- GHD. 2013. "10 Years on How Are Donors Implementing the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles?" GHD.
- Groupe URD. 2009. *Quality COMPAS - Companion Book*.
- Grünwald, François, and Véronique de Geoffroy. 2008. "Principle 7 of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative 'Request Implementing Humanitarian Organisations to Ensure to the Greatest Possible Extent, Adequate Involvement of Beneficiaries in the Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Humanitarian Response.'" Groupe URD.
- Guijt, Irene, and Meera Kaul Shah. 1998. *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- HAP. 2010. "The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management." HAP International.
- HAP. 2013. "Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management." HAP International.
- Hart, Roger A. 1992. "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship." Innocenti Essay 4- UNICEF.
- IASC. 2012. "Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)." Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).
- "International Medical Corps." 2016.
- Jans, Marc, and Kurt De Backer. 2002. "Youth (-Work) and Social Participation – Elements for a

- Practical Theory.” Belgium, Brussels: Flemish Youth Council – JeP.
- Jones, Stephen, and Andrew Kardan. 2013. “A Framework for Analysing Participation in Development.” Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).
- Kazwini, Batoul. 2015. “Waste Management Campaign – Open Community Tartous – Al-Busira Area.” IMC.
- Mansuri, Ghazala, and Vijayendra Rao. 2013. “Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?” A World Bank Policy Research report. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- OCHA. 2014. “Syrian Arab Republic - Governorates Profile (June 2014).” OCHA.
- OCHA. 2015. “Humanitarian Response Plan - January - December 2016- Syrian Arab Republic.” OCHA.
- OECD. 2012. “Towards Better Humanitarian Donorship 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews.”
- OECD. 2001. “Citizens as Partners in Policy-Making.” *FOCUS - Public Management Newsletter*, no. 21: 23.
- “Oxford English Dictionary (OED).” 2000. Oxford University - online publication.
- “Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action, A Handbook for Practitioners, Better Governance Means Greater Participation Coupled with Accountability.” 2000. ALNAP.
- “Participatory Techniques and Tools A WFP Guide.” 2001. WFP.
- Pretty, Jules. 1995. “Participatory Learning for Sustainable Agriculture.” *World Development* 23 (8): 1247–63.
- Rifkin, Susan B., and Maria Kangere. 2002. *Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) as a Participatory Strategy in Africa*. University College London.
- Rudqvist, Anders, and Prudence Woodford-Berger. 1996. “Evaluation and Participation - Some Lessons.” Stockholm: Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation.
- Sphere. 2011. *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. 2011th ed.
- “Syria Military Strength.” 2016.
- The Brookings Institution. 2008. “Moving beyond rhetoric: consultation and participation with populations displaced by conflict or natural disasters.” the Brookings Institution – University of Bern - project on internal displacement.

- Tritter, Jonathan Q., and Alison McCallumb. 2006. "The Snakes and Ladders of User Involvement: Moving beyond Arnstein." *Health Policy* 76: 156–68.
- UNDP. 1993. "Human Development Report." UNDP.
- UNHCR. 2016a. "Syria: Flash Update on Recent Events." UNHCR.
- UNHCR. 2016b. "Syria Regional Refugee Response."
- UNICEF. 2001. "The Participation Rights of Adolescents: A Strategic Approach." UNICEF working paper series.
- White, Sarah C. 1996. "Depoliticising Development: The Uses and Abuses of Participation." *Development in Practice, No.1* 6: 6–15.
- World Bank. 1994. "The World Bank and Participation." Operations Policy Department, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- "World Population Review." 2016.